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**Burns, Caryl Blair**

A STUDY OF SCHOOL DISTRICT LEVEL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS  
IN NORTH CAROLINA

*The University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

Ed.D. 1985

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A STUDY OF SCHOOL DISTRICT LEVEL  
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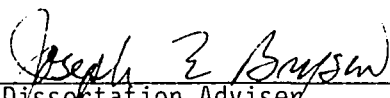
by

Caryl Blair Burns

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
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Doctor of Education

Greensboro  
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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of the public relations programs implemented in the 142 public school units in North Carolina. Data and information for the study were gathered through a four-page questionnaire distributed through the State Department of Public Instruction to all public information officers in the various school units.

Based on an analysis of the data generated from the questionnaire, the following findings were reported: (1) 135 of the 142 public relations practitioners in the school districts meet the educational standard of at least a bachelor's degree. This standard was established by the National School Public Relations Association. (2) Emphasis in the district level programs is on external publics. The five most frequently reported program areas being implemented by the school districts include news releases, special brochures, a school calendar, photography, and programs for community groups. (3) The role of the State Department of Public Instruction, as defined by the school systems, is to provide a constant flow of information to the schools and to provide workshops and staff development.

Recommendations made in the study for district level public relations programs include at least one full-time individual, with at least a bachelor's degree, responsible for the total public relations program. The individual should be given enough time and adequate

financial support to carry out an external and internal program of communications. Major emphasis should be given to internal communications. The program at the district level should be based on a thorough assessment of the publics the program serves and the program should be evaluated on an ongoing basis and at the end of the year.

The study defined the superintendent as the key factor in the school system's public relations program.

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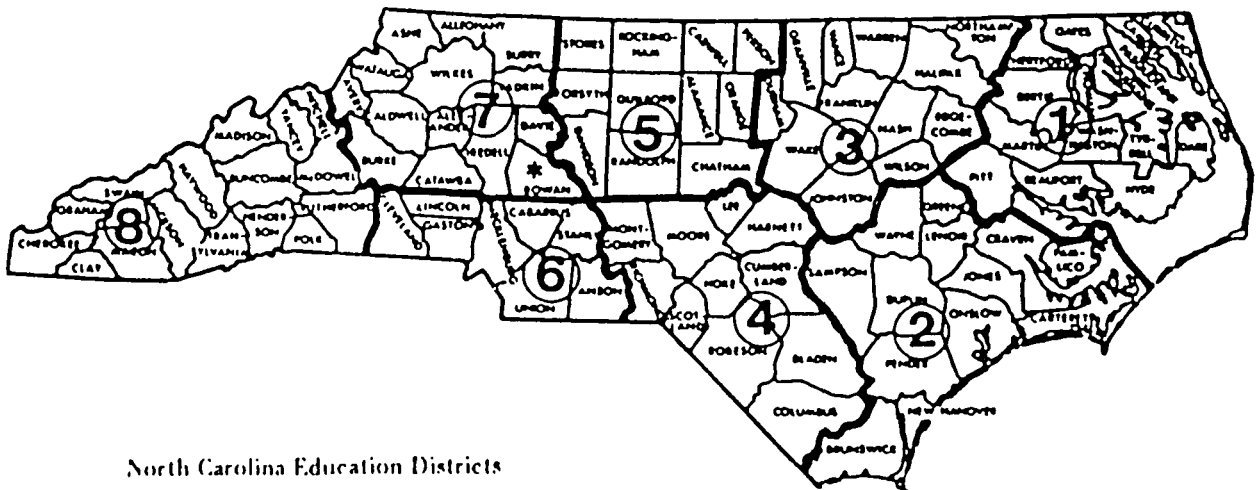
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North Carolina Education Districts

### REGIONAL CENTERS

- 1 Northeast, Williamston
- 2 Southeast, Jacksonville
- 3 Central, Knightdale
- 4 South Central, Carthage
- 5 North Central, Greensboro
- 6 Southwest, Albemarle
- 7 Northwest, North Wilkesboro
- 8 Western, Canton

\*Rowan County, although in Education District 7, is served by the Southwest Regional Education Center in Albemarle.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

School officials are becoming increasingly aware that an effective public relations program is essential for building, maintaining, and improving community support for public education. School systems across the nation are initiating programs with a wide variety of public relations activities, because traditionally,

In a democracy, the citizens will ultimately determine local policy with respect to education, and what parents think of their schools is conditioned by their knowledge of the schools' operation. It is imperative that the schools' public relations contribute to dissemination of that knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Since the public school program is one of the largest and most important public businesses in which the states, and, in many cases, the local governments engage, it is highly important that ". . . the stockholders in this growing concern have a reasonably complete understanding of its organization, its ends, and the means through which those ends are to be realized."<sup>2</sup>

Bagin has also characterized citizens as stockholders in the educational enterprise. Bagin stated that, "People have entrusted

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<sup>1</sup>James J. Jones and Irving W. Stout, School Public Relations (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>School Public Relations: A Report of the Southern States Work Conference on Educational Problems, by John W. Brooker, Chairman (Tallahassee, Florida: State Department of Public Instruction, 1951), p. 29.



their two prized possessions--their children and their money--to the school officials, and they want to know what's being done with them."<sup>3</sup>

Americans have struggled and worked diligently to establish free public schools for all children in local communities. The close relationship between the schools and the local communities has become somewhat of a national principle. In writing of this relationship Stearns said,

The importance of this relationship cannot be overestimated, because the continuance of the system of free public schools, upon which many people believe rests the structure of a free society, depends entirely upon the degree to which the local communities throughout the nation give support in spirit and in money.<sup>4</sup>

If, indeed, a close relationship between school and community is a strength of American public education, the school public relations is a task of major importance. Public understanding and public involvement stand as cornerstones of the nation's system of schooling.

The relationship of the public and the schools is further defined in the law. The legal structure of the state school systems and the various public school laws give the power to manage the schools to the people. At the state level, the people have the right,

to support or oppose legislation affecting the education of children, to work for the modification and repeal of existing laws

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<sup>3</sup>Donald Bagin, Frank Grazian, and Charles H. Harrison, School Communications Ideas That Work (Chicago: Nation's School Press, McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Harry L. Stearns, Community Relations and the Public Schools, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 3.

and to decide at the polls who will represent them in the legislature.<sup>5</sup>

The rights of citizens are similar at the local level when fellow citizens are elected to membership on the board of education and are expected to carry out the will of the people.<sup>6</sup> Because of the shared ownership of the public schools, citizens in the community hold the status of part owner in the schools. They own stock, so to speak, in the schools by virtue of the fact that it is their taxes that support the schools. The dividends received are formal education for themselves and their children and the incidental benefits that flow to society from a literate and well-prepared population in such fields as art, science, industry, and agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

In addressing the need for better public understanding of the schools, some writers have placed the fault on school officials. Cutlip and Center stated:

Evidence abounds that the public does not fully understand modern educational methods and objectives. Too much attention has been focused on the side shows--athletics, baton twirling, extra-curricular activities, social events--and too little attention on the show in the main tent.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Adolph Unruh and Robert A. Willier, Public Relations for Schools (Belmont, California: Lear Siegler, Inc./Fearon Publishers, 1974), p. iii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. iv.

<sup>7</sup>Leslie W. Kindred, Don Bagin, and Donald R. Gallagher, The School and Community Relations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>Scott Cutlip and Allen Center, Effective Public Relations, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 20.

Kindred, in writing of the schools' failure to keep the public informed and involved, noted that "It is not surprising that they regard their schools as the cause of higher taxes rather than a sound social investment."<sup>9</sup> Bortner asserted that boards of education are sometimes insensitive to obligations of keeping the public informed and involved. He suggested that public confidence and support will depend in large measure upon an understanding of the educational process.<sup>10</sup>

Emphasizing the growing need for school officials to communicate better with the public, Bagin asserted,

The administrator who doesn't think of communications when he considers accountability, bond issues, student riots, teacher demands, complaints at board meetings, and community group pressures isn't prepared for today's challenges.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the increasing need for public support, public relations programs in local schools have become a necessity. Bortner stated,

Schools cannot avoid public relations. The people will inform themselves about their schools and will express opinions concerning their effectiveness regardless of whether school officials take positive steps to interpret them. School public relations are not a matter of choice. The only choice open is whether school public relations will be planned or accidental, organized or slipshod.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Leslie W. Kindred, School Public Relations, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison, School Communications, p. vi.

<sup>11</sup>Doyle M. Bortner, Public Relations for Public Schools, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1972), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

Commenting further about the general lack of attention on the part of school officials to planned and organized public relations programs, Bortner has maintained that, "...the basic mistake lies in the failure to understand that no institution in a free society can prosper without public understanding and support."<sup>13</sup>

The existence of a public relations program, whether planned or unplanned, is the subject of an article by Seymour Smith. The title of the article itself has a message for school officials. In "Your District Does Have a Public Relations Program--If You're Not Running It, It's Running You," Smith said,

Whether you like it or don't, your school district does have a public relations program. Granted it may not be visibly systematic, but it does exist. The more unplanned and unsystematic it is, the greater its handicaps to your schools.<sup>14</sup>

Some educators and the general public appear to frown on educators becoming involved in public relations. This occurs probably because of the negative connotation of the term. Koerner asserted,

In the minds of many, public relations has a negative meaning--a result of associating the expression with the practices of Madison Avenue profiteers. This association is unfortunate. The camouflage and smooth talk we sometimes associate with advertising need not be a part of public relations.<sup>15</sup>

The highest aim of school public relations is to bring about a partnership of educators and citizens to improve the schools. Bagin's

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<sup>13</sup>Bortner, Public Relations, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>R. Seymour Smith, "Your District Does Have a Public Relations Program--If You're Not Running It, It's Running You," American School Board Journal 158 (August 1971):27.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas F. Koerner, "Openness, the Only Way," National Association of Secondary School Principals 58 (January 1974):3.

definition of school public relations seems to capture that important aspect of cooperative endeavor:

School public relations is a planned and systematic two-way process of communications between a school system and its "internal" and "external" publics. An effective public relations program effects a feeling of "they're our schools and we're working together to make them better."<sup>16</sup>

Public support is the lifeblood of the public schools. Today's school administrators are facing difficult and perplexing times in securing strong support from students, school personnel, and the external public. With the decline in student enrollment, loss of public confidence, and financial problems, public support has become critical.

Within this setting there are many who continue to demand more of the public schools. In addition to the academics, the schools are expected to provide an extension of extracurricular activities, food service, transportation, career training, and programs for children of every conceivable ability and disability.

In the context of the public's rising expectations and the increasing problems with which the schools are faced, education officials are being forced to examine their communication skills. There is evidence that many school systems do not have effective public relations and do not communicate well with the outside public nor with teachers and other staff members.

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<sup>16</sup>Donald Bagin, How to Start and Improve a PR Program, (Evanston, Illinois: National School Boards Association, 1975), p. 1.

Perhaps school officials of past eras could neglect effective external and internal communications without adverse results. However, the day and time when people believe that school officials possess a special type of omniscience appears to be over. The functions and programs of the schools are under close scrutiny, and no longer is the public willing to leave the job of education entirely in the hands of educators. The situation is critical. Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison stated:

If we wish to maintain the public schools as a vital component of our society, we must do more to bring about a better understanding of how the public schools are supported and operated. Boards and school administrators must do a better job of reaching all audiences, and reaching them quickly and frequently with a wide variety of information.<sup>17</sup>

The future of the American education system may well rest on the educator's ability to relate and communicate with the various publics.

### The Problem

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem for this study was to determine the extent of the public relations programs implemented in the 142 public school units in North Carolina. The study was directed toward the following questions:

1. What is the educational background of the individuals designated as the public relations practitioner or public

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<sup>17</sup>Donald Bagin, Frank Grazian, and Charles H. Harrison, PR for School Board Members, AASA Executive Handbook (Arlington, Virginia: AASA, 1976), p. viii.

relations designees in each school unit?

2. What are the components of the public relations programs in the various school units in North Carolina?
3. What is the role of the State Department of Public Instruction in the district level public relations programs?
4. Based on a review of literature and an analysis of district level public relations programs in North Carolina, what recommendations can be made for essential components of district level public relations programs?
5. What recommendations can be made for a program of assistance provided to school districts by the Division of Publications and Information, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction?

#### Significance of the Problem

Public relations and the support of the public are important to every school system. Schools across the nation have experienced tremendous upheaval over the last twenty-five years. Beginning with the launch of Sputnik on October 7, 1957, the public schools have experienced an avalanche of criticism and, "most of the attacks now being made on education are possible only because many people are poorly informed about the objectives and values of modern school programs."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Daniel Ungaro, How to Create a Better Understanding of Our Schools (Minneapolis, Minnesota: T. S. Dennison and Company, 1959), p. 13.

Jones contended that there isn't much question any more about the status or image of public education in America. It needs help. Jones stated,

From the problem-plagued urban center to the tree-lined and once trouble-free streets of suburbia, to the hills and the valleys of rural America--Education, particularly public education, is in serious trouble....In short, much of America has lost its confidence in public education.<sup>19</sup>

Because of the loss of public confidence in public education and the increase in the number of private and parochial schools, public schools can no longer claim a monopoly on education. Private, parochial, and public schools compete for an ever-dwindling number of students.

Proposals have been introduced in Congress for tuition tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools. Inflation and other financial problems have also taken their toll on the public schools. Sensationalized media coverage has surrounded the publication of various reports on public education. Perhaps the most shocking indictment came from a study done by the National Commission on Excellence in Education entitled "A Nation at Risk." This report states,

If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre education performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war....We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>James J. Jones, School Public Relations (New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1966), p. 10.

<sup>20</sup>A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, by David Pierpont Gardner, Chairman (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 5.



Schools exist because the public considers them desirable, or, more accurately, the public has not pronounced them totally undesirable.<sup>21</sup> With declining enrollments, fewer fiscal resources, and a general loss of confidence in agencies and institutions, public support is essential. Schools can no longer assume that citizens feel deeply committed to support public education. "Periodically the public needs to be reconvinced that education is all important."<sup>22</sup>

This study should be significant to (1) school boards and school systems as they review, revise, or re-examine their local public relations programs; (2) public relations practitioners as they plan, implement, and evaluate district level public relations programs; (3) the State Department of Public Instruction, as programs of assistance from the department are planned in efforts to help school districts in the total area of public relations; and (4) to public relations organizations as they seek to plan programs in areas of interest to public relations practitioners.

#### Need for the Study

School public relations has grown rapidly over the last ten to fifteen years. This growth is evident from the increasing number of school systems employing individuals whose major responsibilities fall in the area of public relations.

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<sup>21</sup>Doyle M. Bortner, Public Relations for Teachers (New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Corporation, 1959), p. 40.

<sup>22</sup>Stanley M. Elam, ed., A Decade of Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education 1969-1978 (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. 1978), p. 6.

According to Tom I. Davis, Special Assistant to the Superintendent, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, three people were employed full-time as public relations directors in school units in the state some fifteen years ago.<sup>23</sup> Today, all 142 school districts designate one individual as the public information officer.

Some of these public information designees work full-time and some part-time in their assignments. The training of these individuals is also varied and the programs for the units have developed sometimes in a systematic fashion and sometimes in a piecemeal fashion, depending on the training of the public relations practitioner and the development of the communications program within the total program of the school system.

The growth in the area of school public relations has been stimulated to a considerable extent by the cultural changes taking place in society and by the emergence of new and critical problems confronting schools today. This growth has been stimulated further by a deepening commitment on the part of many educational and community leaders to establish better communications among school personnel and the community and to increase involvement in the affairs of the school by all areas of the community.

Part of the growth in the number of district level public relations programs in North Carolina came through the Community Schools

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<sup>23</sup>Interview with Tom I. Davis, State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, North Carolina, 23 November 1984.

Act adopted by the legislature in 1977. The act provides for the development of comprehensive community relations programs in each unit. Along with a rapid growth in the field of school and community relations has come a strong need for new and clear directions concerning how public relations programs should be developed, the ingredients that go into them, and the ends toward which they should be directed.

Improving the communications program of the school system should be one of the ongoing priorities of each school administrative unit. Improvements can be developed more effectively by defining current programs and by comparing these programs with excellent existing programs.

It was anticipated that this study would provide sufficient information from which recommendations for improvements in the public relations programs of the school units in North Carolina can be made.

### Definitions and Limitations

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined in an effort to provide a general agreement as to their meaning and usage in this study:

Administrative unit. Includes both county and city units that have been organized in one of the North Carolina counties or cities as a special chartered unit under the General Statutes of North Carolina.

Public relations. A planned and systematic process of communication between an educational organization and its internal and external publics.

Internal public. All individuals and groups considered as part of the school organization.

External public. All individuals and groups outside of the school program or organization.

Public relations director. The individual designated by the school district to the State Department of Public Instruction as the individual responsible for the public relations program within the school unit. The term "public relations director" will be used interchangeably with "public information officer" and with "public relations practitioner" within this study.

### Limitations

The population for this study was limited to the county and city public school administrative units in the public school systems of North Carolina as shown in the Educational Directory for North Carolina for 1984-85. A survey was sent to the public information officer of each of the 142 units listed in the Educational Directory.

### Organization of the Study

The introduction included in Chapter I of this study identified the problem, presented the need, significance, and rationale for the research, and identified five questions to be answered by the study.

Chapter II will present an outline of related literature concerning the general development of public relations programs and, specifically, school public relations programs. The outline will detail major components of a district level public relations program

including policy development, data collection for planning purposes, program planning, program implementation, and program evaluation.

Chapter III will describe the methodology used to collect data for the study, along with an analysis of the data received. The descriptive analysis will follow the procedures and format approved by the Graduate School, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, in a dissertation entitled "A Study of the Evaluation Process of School Superintendents in North Carolina" completed in 1978 by Henry S. Grill.

Chapter IV will be a detailed description of district level public relations programs for five school units of different size. Chapter V will be a summary of the study, along with conclusions drawn and recommendations made as a result of the entire study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of literature is presented in the following five sections: (1) the development of public relations; (2) the development of school public relations; (3) the school public relations program including the role of the superintendent, the need for a school public relations specialist, the duties and role of the public relations practitioner, planning in school public relations, budgeting, evaluation; (4) internal communications, and (5) external communications.

#### The Development of Public Relations

Even though a comprehensive history of public relations has not been written, a study of the origins of public relations indicates that efforts to deal with the force of opinion and to communicate with others goes back to antiquity. Public opinion played a part in shaping events among the early Greeks and Romans, even though the publics were small in size and number, the channels of expressions limited, and the methods of communications rather simple.

The Greek theorists studied the importance of public will, even though they did not specifically use the term "public opinion." Certain phrases and ideas in the political vocabulary of the Romans are related to modern concepts of public opinion. The Romans inscribed

on their walls the slogan, "S.P.Q.R. -- the Senate and the Roman People." Later, the Romans coined the expression vox populi, vox Dei -- "the voice of the people is the voice of God."<sup>1</sup>

Efforts to communicate information to influence viewpoints or actions can be traced through early civilizations. Much of what is known of ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Persia was recorded in efforts to publicize and glorify the rulers of that day. Much of the literature and art of antiquity was designed to build support for kings, priests, and other leaders. Virgil's Georgics represented a persuasive effort to get urban dwellers to move to the farms to produce food for the growing city. Demosthenes used publicity to oppose the imperialist schemes of Philip of Macedon. The walls of Pompeii were inscribed with election appeals. Caesar carefully prepared the Romans for his crossing of the Rubicon in 50 B. C. by sending reports to Rome concerning his epic achievements as governor of Gaul.<sup>2</sup>

Rudimentary elements of public relations can be found in the history of ancient India. In the writings of the earliest times there is mention of the king's spies who did more than carry on espionage. Their function included keeping the kings in touch with public opinion. They also championed the king in public and spread rumors favorable to the government.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> A. L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1954), p. 122.

Public relations was heralded many centuries ago in England when the kings maintained Lords Chancellor as "Keeper of the King's Conscience." Long before the technology of modern communication, a need was identified through the Lord Chancellor to function as a third party to facilitate communication and adjustment between the government and the people. So it was with the church, tradesmen, and craftsmen. The word propaganda was born in the seventeenth century when the Catholic Church set up its College of Propaganda to carry on the faith.<sup>4</sup>

The American beginnings of public relations can be found in the American Revolution which brought the struggle for power between patriots and the Tories. Efforts to move and manipulate public opinion are demonstrated in the works of Samuel Adams and his contemporaries. According to Davidson, "Sam Adams owned no superior as propagandist. No one in the colonies realized more fully than he the primary necessity of arousing public opinion; no one set about it more assiduously."<sup>5</sup> Although the common people gave the American Revolution strength, it was a small group of men who organized and promoted the revolt. These militants -- among them Adams, his cousin John Adams, Thomas Paine, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson -- brought about the birth of the nation. These men were the first to demonstrate the power of an organized, articulate minority carrying the day against an unorganized, apathetic majority.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Cutlip and Center, Effective Public Relations, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>Philip Davidson, Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941) p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Cutlip and Center, Effective Public Relations, p. 50.



The modern concept of public relations involving mass communications was little known in the early days of the nation. Large-scale development of the practice of public relations did not occur until the twentieth century.

Although the roots of today's public relations practices extend deeply into the past, the definite beginnings date from the early 1900s when the United States entered the twentieth century. Cutlip and Center defined five main periods of growth for public relations in the United States:

1. 1900 - 1917 -- The era of muckraking journalism countered by defensive publicity, a period of far-reaching political reforms;
2. 1917 - 1919 -- World War I, which brought dramatic demonstrations of the power of organized promotion to kindle a fervent patriotism -- to sell war bonds, and to raise millions for welfare work;
3. 1919 - 1933 -- This period saw the principals and practices of publicity learned in the war put to use promoting products, earning acceptance for changes brought by the war-accelerated technology, winning political battles, and raising millions of dollars for charitable causes;
4. 1933 - 1945 -- The period of the Great Depression and World War II, events profound and far-reaching in their impact, which advanced the art and extended the practice of public relations;

5. 1945 - present -- The Mid-Twentieth Century era, which has brought a tremendous boom in public relations practice and a maturing concept.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Development of School Public Relations

The development of school public relations has basically paralleled the general development of public relations in the United States. According to tradition, historical necessity dictated the evolution of the public school system. In colonial days, there were no public schools. The groundwork of the system was laid in 1642 when Massachusetts passed a law calling for universal education. Five years later another law established school districts. Towns of fifty householders were required to provide a teacher, and towns of one hundred households, a Latin grammar school. In 1802 Ohio made the first public land grant in America for school use. New generations of Americans wanted an education and they worked for state and local control of the public schools.

Probably the first systematic effort to raise funds in the United States was sponsored by Harvard College in 1641 when the college sent three preachers to England on a "begging mission." Once in England, these fund raisers found that they needed a fund-raising brochure and relayed this need back to Harvard. In response to this request came New England's First Fruits, largely written in Massachusetts but

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<sup>7</sup>Cutlip and Center, Effective Public Relations, p. 50.

printed in London in 1643.<sup>8</sup> Columbia University may have been the first institution to use a press release as a means of gaining public notice. News announcements of the first commencement, June 21, 1758, at King's College, as Columbia was then called, ran in all of the New York City journals and all accounts were identical. Someone, his name lost to oblivion, sent the copy to the publishers with a June 26 release date. The handouts stated, "Mr. Printer. Please to insert the following in your next paper."<sup>9</sup>

Like all new ideas, the idea of universal, secular, state-controlled education was hard to achieve. But by the 1850s the public school began to emerge victorious. By this time many influential people recognized the necessity for state supported public schools and the right of the state to tax for school purposes.

Even though the public school system continued to develop into the twentieth century, Bernays stated that public understanding of education developed slowly. According to Bernays,

The slow development of public understanding can be attributed to the fact that the pioneers were too much absorbed in the heroic business of clearing a continent. The fur trader and Indian fighter had little opportunity or time to think about the importance of education.<sup>10</sup>

Public education began to come into its own only when the more substantial farmers made improvements in the land, when the cities and

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<sup>8</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison, The Founding of Harvard College (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 303.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Edward L. Bernays, Public Relations (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 25.

industries were established, and when banks established the nation's financial structure.

The necessity for keeping the public informed is certainly as old as the public schools. It was not until the 1920s that a formal approach was made toward public relations. This formal approach began with studies of publicity, especially newspaper publicity and the value the publicity had in keeping the school before the people and in helping them understand what the schools were doing. During this period at least three books and a few articles appeared in professional journals on the subject of school publicity.<sup>11</sup>

Within a few years the term publicity was replaced with the phrase "school public relations." This change occurred because it was felt that the word "publicity" carried both positive and negative connotations and because people felt that a more inclusive concept than publicity was necessary for telling people about the public schools.

In 1928, Arthur B. Moehlman published the first book in educational administration dealing with school public relations. He defined public school relations as an organized factual information service for the purpose of keeping the public informed of its education program.

These pioneer efforts were followed eleven years later with another book by Moehlman setting forth the doctrine of "social

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<sup>11</sup>George R. Rollo, Newspaper Publicity for Public Schools (New York: A. G. Seiler, 1922); Clyde R. Miller and Fred Charles, Publicity and the Public Schools (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924); and Harlan Cameron Hines and Robinson G. Jones, Public School Publicity (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923).

interpretation." According to this doctrine, "Social interpretation may be considered as that activity whereby the institution is made aware of community conditions and needs and the factual information service whereby the people are kept continuously informed of the purpose, value, conditions, and needs of their education program."<sup>12</sup> In other words, it is a two-way system of communication through which the community is translated to the school and the school to the community.

Over the last fifty to sixty years, since the first book published with the title of School Public Relations, numerous books and articles have been written in an attempt to define the total concept of school public relations. Many of these publications were the product of the National School Public Relations Association, one of the most influential organizations in school public relations. The Association was founded in 1935 as an outgrowth of a committee of the National Education Association. Based in the Washington, D.C. area, the National School Public Relations Association builds support and serves as an information base for education through responsible communications.

The work of school administrators and teachers over the last century, along with the research of organizations such as the National School Public Relations Association and the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators and

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<sup>12</sup>Arthur B. Moehlman, Public School Relations (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1928), p. 4.

others, has developed the body of knowledge that defines the best practices in school public relations today.

### The School Public Relations Program

#### The Role of the Superintendent

The literature emphasizes that it is the superintendent who is primarily responsible for the public relations function within a school system, even though in most cases the superintendent delegates the actual day-to-day work in the area of public relations to other people. Bortner stated that,

. . . it is the superintendent who sets the tone and tempo for school public relations. In the absence of his leadership, it is unlikely that school public relations will ever be more than a potpourri of informal, hit or miss measures, at least on the community-wide level.<sup>13</sup>

Mayer has reinforced the idea of the crucial role of the superintendent in public relations in stating,

The person most responsible for building an effective public relations program is the superintendent. For a small district, the superintendent serves as his own public relations specialist. In a large district, a staff member is appointed for the public relations assignment; yet the superintendent is still responsible.<sup>14</sup>

In addressing the importance of public relations to the success of the superintendent, Jones points out that studies have shown that superintendents have listed public relations high in priority lists of weaknesses they perceive in themselves and that studies have revealed

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<sup>13</sup>Doyle M. Bortner, Public Relations for Public Schools (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1972), p. 62.

<sup>14</sup>Frank Mayer, Public Relations for School Personnel (Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing Company, 1974), p. 22.

also that ". . . the most frequently mentioned factor (other than incompetence) preventing success of the superintendent is poor public relations."<sup>15</sup>

Further stressing the point of the superintendent's need for concern with public relations, Bortner states,

Formal studies as well as informal observations attest to the fact that his competency in public relations is a primary factor in determining his overall success or failure. The record shows that when superintendents are in difficulty, poor community relations and, more specifically, tendencies to try to reduce public curiosity, to consider "no news," as "good news," and to characterize public relations as "Madison Avenue high pressure tactics" are most frequently to blame.<sup>16</sup>

Bortner has observed that the job of the superintendent relative to public relations is one of organizing resources and machinery into an operational program. Although the job of organizing an operational public relations program is a crucial responsibility, it is not an easy one. Bortner further laments that the typical school administrator has not had much professional training in organizing school public relations programs as compared with his training in the areas of curriculum, business administration, or transportation.<sup>17</sup>

#### The Need for a School Public Relations Specialist

More and more, superintendents are delegating the public relations responsibilities to a staff member who works in the public relations area either on a full-time or a part-time basis. The size of the

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<sup>15</sup>John J. Jones, School Public Relations (New York: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1966), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Bortner, Public Relations, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

school system usually determines the amount of time a staff member or several staff members must spend in public relations activities.

Thomas Koerner, writing in the American School Board Journal, advised school officials that not employing a public relations specialist is asking for problems. He stated,

Boards that pooh-pooh the idea of hiring a public relations specialist are bad news. Most likely they'll wind up as bad news in the local press as well as in the minds of their constituents.<sup>18</sup>

Citing the long range implications of neglect of building public support, Koerner added,

. . . boards are beginning to realize that threatened loss of support of their programs jeopardizes the structure and possibly even the existence of the public school system as it functions now.<sup>19</sup>

Koerner further asserted that school boards are faced with a multitude of contemporary problems such as busing, dress codes, collective bargaining, integration, teacher and student militancy, to mention a few.<sup>20</sup> His contention was that,

Skilled public relations experts can help superintendents and board members meet problems such as these. A panacea or cure-all they are not. Given the proper status, however, plus sufficient resources and support, such specialists usually perform most satisfactorily for a board, sometimes even spectacularly.<sup>21</sup>

The National School Public Relations Association offers assistance to local school systems in regard to the employment of professional personnel. In its Standards for Educational Public Relations Programs,

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<sup>18</sup>Thomas F. Koerner, "Why Your Board Deserves a Full-time PR Man," American School Board Journal 158 (September 1970): 36.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.



the Association stated that,

Recognition of public relations as a management function of primary importance shall be demonstrated through the existence of a unit staffed by full-time professional public relations personnel. Staff size shall be sufficient to accomplish the objectives of the organization and to cope with the variety of inherent conditions and problems.<sup>22</sup>

The National School Public Relations Association has not established a rigid number of public relations professionals needed by school districts. The Association maintains that the size and nature of the community affect the role and efficiency of the public relations operation. In working with school districts for nearly fifty years, the National School Public Relations Association maintains that the key to staffing revolves around the scope of the public relations program, the nature of the community, and the additional assignments given to the public relations personnel.<sup>23</sup>

Public school public relations practitioners have a variety of position titles. The titles used most frequently include assistant superintendent, administrative assistant, director of community relations, director of public relations, communications director, director of information and public relations, director of information and community relations, director of information and communications, and director of community-school relations. Besides these titles there are a few other titles such as director of publications, coordinator of

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<sup>22</sup>Evaluating Your School PR Investment (Arlington, Virginia: National School Public Relations Association, 1984), p. 47.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

school information, and public information officer.<sup>24</sup>

These titles represent a shift in concept that has taken place in the last two decades. Previously the emphasis was on public relations; today it is more on community, communication, and information. These three words are now employed in combination with another word such as director or officer in the title of the position.<sup>25</sup>

The position of director of school-community relations varies somewhat in terms of the administrative level at which it is placed. Only the largest school systems designate the public relations practitioner as an assistant or associate superintendent with line authority. Usually the person holds a staff position and his or her title carries the word "director" in most instances.<sup>26</sup> As a staff member, the officer reports directly to the superintendent, though in some school districts the public relations practitioner reports to some other administrator such as an assistant, associate, or a deputy superintendent.<sup>27</sup>

With the public becoming more sensitive to educational costs and to what goes on in schools, it is imperative that the public relations practitioner be a member of the superintendent's cabinet.<sup>28</sup> The

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<sup>24</sup>1983-1984 NSPRA Membership Directory (Arlington, Virginia: The National School Public Relations Association, 1984).

<sup>25</sup>Leslie W. Kindred, Don Bagin, and Donald R. Gallagher, The School and Community Relations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), p. 61.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

National School Public Relations Association also states in its standards for educational public relations programs that the public relations responsibilities "shall be assigned to an individual who reports directly to the chief executive officer and who participates as a full member of the administrative cabinet."<sup>29</sup> The practitioner can help district administrators understand how a decision will be perceived by the public. Finally, the public relations practitioner needs to be part of the cabinet if the cabinet members are to understand thoroughly the feelings of the community.

#### The Duties and Roles of the Public Relations Practitioner

The duties and responsibilities of the public relations practitioner depend, to a great extent, on the placement of the practitioner in reference to other staff members. Bagin has asserted that the director of public relations should have a job description which reflects the goals of the communications policy. He has pointed out that the job should be specifically aimed at achieving certain objectives. Bagin et al. noted that,

Few things are less effective than vague mandates "to improve communications" or "to rehabilitate our image." The responsibilities should be in a written job description to assure accountability. The relationship to other staff members and the person's superior should be clearly communicated in this description.<sup>30</sup>

Direct accessibility to the superintendent was also advised by

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<sup>29</sup>Evaluating Your School PR Investment, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup>Donald Bagin, Frank Grazian, and Charles H. Harrison, School Communications Ideas That Work (Chicago: National School Press, McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 12.

Bagin, who maintained that the public relations practitioner should have a direct report relationship to the superintendent.<sup>31</sup> In suggesting general areas of responsibility for the public relations practitioner, Bagin included six such areas: research, counsel, planning, coordination, communication, and evaluation. He suggested that specific responsibilities might include:

... establishing media relations, providing in-service public relations help for staff, preparing news releases and publications, leading school finance election campaigns, conducting community surveys, running a speakers' bureau, writing speeches and reports, working with advisory committees, establishing board meeting environment, and gaining feedback from community to provide input to the management team.<sup>32</sup>

In addressing the duties and responsibilities of the public relations director, Bortner stated that "the duties and responsibilities of the director, particularly where full-time, should extend well beyond the areas of publicity and management of special events."<sup>33</sup> Bortner offered the following sixteen responsibilities for public relations directors:

1. Planning, editing, producing, distributing, and evaluating all school publications and reports
2. Planning and supervising the production of films, filmstrips, slides, and other audio-visual materials intended for informational purposes
3. Developing and maintaining constructive relations with the mass media
4. Planning and managing special events

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>33</sup>Bortner, Public Relations, p. 75.

5. Planning school building, bond, and tax campaigns
6. Developing and maintaining relations with community organizations and agencies
7. Organizing and supervising a speakers' bureau
8. Providing information and referral services
9. Coordinating all aspects of the school system's public relations activities
10. Conducting in-service training in public relations
11. Advising the superintendent
12. Securing, analyzing, and reporting information concerning opinions and attitudes
13. Cooperating with the local professional association
14. Participating in collective bargaining meetings
15. Directing and managing administrative routines
16. Planning and maintaining an effective program of internal communications.<sup>34</sup>

Leslie Kindred has identified eight basic functions as possible position guides for the director of school-community relations. These guides include

1. Establishing and maintaining efficient channels of communication between personnel within the school system
2. Coordinating the public relations activities of all personnel employed by the board of education
3. Providing services on call which contribute either directly or indirectly to the strengthening of the school-community relations program
4. Working cooperatively with outside groups and organizations that have constructive interests in public education

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<sup>34</sup>Bortner, Public Relations, pp. 75-78.

5. Undertaking assigned responsibilities in the school-community relations program
6. Involving citizens in the work of the school and in the solving of educational problems
7. Serving as a consultant to the superintendent, and through him to the board of education on matters involving relationships with the community
8. Appraising the effectiveness of the public relations program and making recommendations for its improvement.<sup>35</sup>

### Planning in School Public Relations

In the area of planning and organizing a public relations program, the literature frequently admonishes school officials to plan systematically and thoroughly. Many writers in the field point to the lack of good planning as a crucial weakness in school public relations programs. In this view Fusco stated,

Perhaps the reason that many school-community relations programs flounder is that they are not organized programs at all. Too often school administrators adopt a "fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants" approach, use guesswork to plan and evaluate their programs and merely copy the school-community relations practices of other school systems which appear to be successful.<sup>36</sup>

Regardless of the organizational pattern chosen for the school system's public relations program, Fusco contended that good planning is essential. He has recommended "management by objectives" as a procedure to follow to ensure sound public relations planning. Fusco explained his conception of management by objectives in five steps.

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<sup>35</sup>Leslie W. Kindred, "Position Guide for Director of School-Community Relations," Bulletin of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association 28 (March 1964): pp. 38-41.

<sup>36</sup>Gene C. Fusco, Improving Your School-Community Relations Program (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 10-11.

First, the school administrator must determine the needs of the community, meaning the characteristics of the community and the citizens' aspirations concerning the nature and purpose of education for their children. Second, broad goals for the public relations program should be established. The goals should be based on the needs determined in step one. Next, the broad goals of the public relations program should be broken down into smaller parts and written in terms of objectives which specify actually what is to be accomplished and some measurable ways of deciding to what extent the object has been attained. Fourth, programs are designed which are geared to achieve the objectives. Administrative and operational relationships should be developed for the programs as well as alternative approaches. Last, there is a need for the identification of resources necessary to carry out the public relations programs. Resources include personnel, equipment, materials, and funds necessary to implement the programs for one fiscal year and possibly for a longer time period.<sup>37</sup>

Planning an effective school public relations program requires certain definite procedures according to Don Bagin. Bagin contended that an early part of the planning of a solid school public relations program should be the adoption of a school board policy relative to public relations. Some of the advantages to having such a policy are that it provides consistency and unity among school board members and school personnel concerning the district's communications policies; it

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

provides guidelines and objectives for communications efforts; it will provide answers which are ready and reasonable to community pressure groups.<sup>38</sup>

Also, Bagin has pointed out that in order to plan for an effective school public relations program, there are some definite pitfalls to be avoided such as,

Appointing an English teacher with no preparation in the field of public relations to the PR position

Selecting a friend or relative of a board member for the post

Transferring someone who is not succeeding in one post to the newly created public relations position

Naming a teacher to the post on a part-time basis

Suddenly placing a line item position for public relations in the budget

Combining the public relations responsibility with another key job or two and not informing the person handling the responsibility about the importance of public relations and the goals to be set and reached

Regarding the newly appointed communications specialist as little more than a writer of news releases

Starting a program without defined objectives.<sup>39</sup>

In the area of sound planning for school public relations, the National School Public Relations Association strongly demonstrates its commitment to proper planning. In the first sentence of its Standards for Educational Public Relations Programs, the Association states that,

Educational public relations is a planned and systematic management function to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive two-way

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<sup>38</sup>Bagin, PR Program, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.



communications process involving both internal and external publics, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role,<sup>40</sup> objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the organization.

Also, the Association, in the first section of its standards, has called for educational organizations to have a written policy statement for the public relations program as follows:

1. The organization shall adopt a clear and concise public relations policy statement.
2. The policy statement shall be approved through formal action of the organization's governing body, shall be published in its policy manual, and shall be reviewed annually by the governing body.
3. The policy statement shall express the purposes of the organization's public relations program and shall provide for the delegation of authority to appropriate executives.<sup>41</sup>

The Association also commits itself and its membership to long-range planning by the following entries in the Association's standards:

1. The organization shall provide for long-range public relations planning.
2. The organization shall develop a plan for anticipating, preparing for, and dealing with the public aspects of unusual or crisis situations.
3. Emphasis shall be given to seeking and developing new and different avenues of communications and relationships.<sup>42</sup>

#### Budgeting the School Public Relations Program

To be effective, school public relations programs must have adequate financial support. A study done by J. E. Hinton at the University of Indiana found that there was a lack of a separate budget

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<sup>40</sup>Evaluating Your School PR Investment, p. 46.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

for public relations activities and he encouraged superintendents to adopt a special budget for the school public relations program.<sup>43</sup> Norman and Achilles advised that an important budget consideration relative to local school system public relations program would be the appropriation of funds for the salary of a full-time, calendar year director of public relations.<sup>44</sup>

Regarding budgeting, Bagin stated that the costs of a public relations component often have been given as an excuse for not initiating a program. However, he recommended that this resistance can be overcome by involving citizens in the study of the needs for improved communications and by explaining costs to them on a per-person basis. He indicates that most people would not be opposed to spending one dollar per person in the district, and that amount could pay for a full-time director of public relations in most districts. He suggests another guideline for the budgeting of one percent of the school system's operating budget and concluded that, "most districts never come anywhere close to that figure."<sup>45</sup>

As in other areas of public relations planning, the National School Public Relations Association has standards relating to budgeting for public relations programs. Concerning the areas of resources, the

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<sup>43</sup>J. E. Hinton, "A Survey and Appraisal of the Position of City School System Public Relations Directors" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1961), p. 193.

<sup>44</sup>C. Douglas Norman and C. M. Achilles, "A Score and Two Ways to Attain Success on a Modest School PR Program," American School Board Journal (June 1974):39.

<sup>45</sup>Bagin, PR Program, p. 26.

standards state,

Commitment to the achievement of the purposes of the organization's public relations policy shall be demonstrated through the allocation of adequate human and financial resources to the public relations programs.<sup>46</sup>

The standards further state that, "The organization's budget shall include a specific item for public relations staffing, services, and programs."<sup>47</sup>

In addressing the cost factor of school public relations programs, Mayer maintained that,

A public relations program need not cost a great deal of money. A fairly effective program can be developed with little or no financial expenditure. A public relations program need not be a replica of a sophisticated metropolitan district's program. Publications, for example, do not have to be slick four-color productions. If funds are lacking, it is better to distribute a mimeographed community newsletter through elementary students than to have none at all.

Many public relations efforts such as Koffee Klatches, parent conferences, news releases, and radio appearances cost no money at all.<sup>48</sup>

#### Evaluation in School Public Relations

One of the most important elements of a public relations program is the evaluation component. Evaluation of public relations programs, however, appears to be rather limited and incomplete. Reporting in a dissertation study, Pearson stated, "Evaluations of public relations programs are seldom made. The evaluations that have been made are rather limited, relying primarily upon the opinion of individuals."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Evaluating Your School PR Investment, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>48</sup>Mayer, Public Relations, p. 22.

<sup>49</sup>Robert J. Pearson, "Public Relations Research Concerned with Public Elementary and Secondary Schools," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1956) p. 228.

Wherry has suggested that the reason evaluation is not done or is done in very limited ways is that many school public relations programs do not have specified objectives to be accomplished, thereby making evaluation quite difficult. He stated, "The key is the lack of objectives under which public relations programs can operate. If there are no objectives, evaluation has no basis."<sup>50</sup>

Cutlip and Center reinforced Wherry's conclusion concerning evaluation by stating that, "The total effort must be kept in view. An important step is to review, periodically, the total program and to measure its results against the assigned objectives."<sup>51</sup>

Concerning evaluation, Jones stated that it should be a vital component of school public relations. He maintained,

The school administrator must have means for finding out in what ways the general program of public relations is proving to be satisfactory and in what ways it is proving unsatisfactory and why. He needs to know how effectively each phase of the program is functioning and what changes, if any, are desirable. What parts of the program provoke public criticism? What portion of the program are working best? Answers to these and similar questions may be obtained through proper evaluation.<sup>52</sup>

While calling for evaluation, Jones also pointed out that evaluation of school public relations has not yet reached a very high degree of sophistication. He stated that,

Few standardized, objective methods of appraising public relations programs have been developed. Many programs of public relations are not highly enough developed to encourage

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<sup>50</sup>John H. Wherry, "School System Public Relations Practice in North Central Association Cities of Over 100,000 Population" (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1970), p. 67.

<sup>51</sup>Cutlip and Center, Effective Public Relations, p. 178.

<sup>52</sup>Jones, School Public Relations, p. 94.

administrators to evaluate them or to compare them in some formal way with those of other districts. Yet there are many ways which administrators may find useful and helpful if they really seek to discover how well they are doing in this regard.<sup>53</sup>

Commenting on evaluation, Bortner held that it deserves special attention, ". . . because of its unique importance and because it is so often ignored."<sup>54</sup> He further contended that school public relations, ". . . like any other school program, should be appraised in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, its successes and failures."<sup>55</sup> In order to carry out an effective appraisal of the program, he stated that,

This calls for methodical, analytical, and periodic appraisal of results in contrast to "keeping one's ear to the ground" or developing general impressions. In the absence of such appraisal, it is clearly impossible either to justify the costs and efforts of the program, correct its deficiencies, or improve its effectiveness.<sup>56</sup>

Acknowledging that evaluation in school public relations is difficult and that research is greatly needed in the area, Bortner nevertheless asserted that, "reasonably sound appraisals can be made and the difficulties should not be regarded as rationalizations for doing nothing."<sup>57</sup>

Concerning evaluation Bagin stated, "In order to evaluate a public relations program properly, a school district must plan what it expects

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>54</sup>Bortner, Public Relations, p. 78.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

to accomplish with the program and decide what means will be used to meet its objectives."<sup>58</sup>

Bagin raised a point relative to "product" and "process" evaluation in stating,

Evaluation of any program is essential to the effectiveness of what is attempted and planned. It is not uncommon for a school district to evaluate its public relations program only on the "product" it expects and not the process employed.<sup>59</sup>

Calling for more attention to be given to evaluating the process or means, Bagin continued,

Consideration should be given to which means are going to be used . . . news releases, radio programs, community group meetings, public involvement in the schools, speakers' bureaus, community involvement by students and staff members, the use of local talent in the schools, as well as other methods. An evaluation of these means can be conducted before they are used and after they have been tried for a period of time.<sup>60</sup>

In evaluating the results or "products" of the school system's public relations program, Bagin stated that all too often,

School board members form an evaluation on the basis of limited personal experiences and impressions. Others evaluate the program on the number of brochures printed, and newsletters sent to the community, radio programs aired, and other one-way methods of communicating with various publics.<sup>61</sup>

Bagin suggested that product evaluation should be based on whether the processes actually did communicate and what effect the processes had on the people who received information. He suggested that there are some ways to accomplish the evaluation of the product or results of a school public relations program and he recommended questionnaires,

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<sup>58</sup>Bagin, PR Program, p. 44.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

opinion polls, records, the panel technique, and telephone surveys.<sup>62</sup>

### Internal Communications

Internal communications have become increasingly important to school systems. Over the years, school systems have traditionally spent more time and effort in the area of external communication efforts. Rarely did school officials think of structuring a program of effective two-way communication efforts with the internal publics---- the employees and the students. School administrators and boards are coming to understand the importance of good internal communications. This awareness has been brought about by the need to gain continued public support for education. Three reasons for a good internal communications program as defined by Kindred include (1) a good external communications program cannot survive without it; (2) constructive ideas will be suggested by employees because someone is listening and informing them; and (3) human needs, such as recognition and sense of belonging, will be met, thus making most employees more productive.<sup>63</sup>

Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison emphasized the importance of effective communication with the school staff. They asserted that,

A key part, if not the most important part, of the school communications program is sound internal communications. Every school administrator wants good staff morale -- and many studies

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Leslie W. Kindred, Don Bagin, and Donald R. Gallagher, The School and Community Relations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), p. 94.

indicate that good morale is directly dependent on the effectiveness of the district's two-way communications efforts.<sup>64</sup>

They continued their emphasis on internal communications by stating that,

No one enjoys finding out something about his place of employment from a next door neighbor. Nor does he feel important when his opinion isn't sought in his area of expertise. It's important to establish a team spirit in every school building. Employees want to be informed; they want to be a vital part of the two-way communications flow. The desire to be in on what's going on is often listed as the number one job concern by employees.<sup>65</sup>

Mayer also contended that good internal communications is essential to a good school public relations program. He stated that the morale or feelings of the school staff,

. . . are enhanced by a good internal communications program which provides the staff with a maximum of information; with information as soon as it becomes available and before it reaches the news media. A staff with a good spirit and attitude is important and more influential than the total efforts of the formal public relations program -- including its publications and the many community speeches.<sup>66</sup>

#### The Role of the Teacher

In addressing the internal communications program, the importance of the teacher in school public relations is frequently mentioned in the literature. Bagin et al. stated that,

Teachers are the most important part of a school's public relations program. Teachers who do an excellent job in the classroom and who know what's going on in their district convey a favorable impression to the people they meet. Every effort must be exerted to communicate with all teachers.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison, School Communications, p. 29.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Mayer, Public Relations, p. 65.

<sup>67</sup>Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison, School Communications, p. 30.



Bortner also stressed the role of the teacher by stating,

The teacher is unquestionably the most influential single agent in developing public opinion concerning the schools. Regardless of the attention given to other phases of school public relations, an individual school or school system that loses sight of the teacher's key role will never win community support. Regardless of the competencies of administrators in public relations, they must understand and promote the teacher's role if their own efforts are not to be exercises in futility.<sup>68</sup>

Bortner contended that the reason for the teacher's crucial and key public relations role is that successful school public relations is founded on a sound instructional program, and it is the teacher who must "produce through good instruction before public confidence can be developed and maintained."<sup>69</sup>

#### The Responsibility of the Total School Staff

Although the literature stresses the importance of the teacher's role in public relations and the necessity for sound internal communications so that the teacher will be informed and involved, emphasis is also placed on public relations as a responsibility of the total staff. The American Association of School Administrators' Public Relations for America's Schools stated that,

By every means possible administrators must impress upon the staff this inescapable fact: Every staff member is a public relations agent. His manners, bearing, dress, and his attitude toward and treatment of children and parents are the raw materials out of which school public relations are forged.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Bortner, Public Relations, p. 105.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>American Association of School Administrators, Public Relations for America's Schools, Twenty-Eighth Yearbook, 1950 (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1950), p. 168.

Regarding nonteaching, support staff members, the Yearbook states,

Every staff member means not only teachers and supervisors. It means clerks, custodians, bus drivers, secretaries, school doctors, nurses, cafeteria managers, and the host of employees who are an integral part of school organizations. Too often in thinking about the school personnel and their part in the public relations program, the superintendent tends to forget the highly important people who answer his telephones, greet his visitors, and play host to the general public. Yet, it must be remembered that the citizen's very first contact with the school authorities comes through the members of the nonteaching staff. The appearance of the building and grounds, the way a visitor is treated and greeted by the clerk or the principal's secretary -- these, particularly when they are first impressions, are likely to be lasting ones.<sup>71</sup>

### The Role of the Principal

Although the roles of the superintendent, public relations director, teacher, and nonteaching staff have been given much importance in developing a strong communications plan, the role of the principal appears to be the key leadership role. In addressing the principal's role, Olds asserted,

Because the scope of communications is so broad and the educational expertise so vast, it is quite unrealistic to assume, even if the talent might be available, that public relations specialists could be employed to meet the need. Even if this could be done, it might be self-defeating. Too many administrators could conclude that the communications area could take care of itself.

What seems destined to happen is that communications functions and responsibilities of the administrator, especially the building principal, are to become far more demanding.<sup>72</sup>

Further emphasizing the principal's leadership responsibilities,

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Robert Olds, "The Principal's PR Role," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 58 (January 1974): 19-20.

Olds stated that,

The principal who puts public relations at the bottom of his priority list is shortsighted and should expect his school's eventual breakdown.

The principal who says that he is "too busy" or is engulfed in so many other responsibilities that he has no time to engage in activities designed to improve public relations or staff relations is revealing much more than he intends.<sup>73</sup>

How does the principal go about developing a strong public relations program in his school? Although more and more help is becoming available, Olds asserted that there is no established pattern. He maintained, "This inevitably will be, and should be, a do-it-yourself development operation. There are no effective communication programs that can be duplicated in cookie-cutter fashion."<sup>74</sup>

Felicetti has suggested that there is a more subtle form of communication which must take place for good internal relationships to exist. He stated, "This is the communication of feeling. Communicating warmth, interest, and concern cannot be done without personal contact and a commitment to the education of individuals."<sup>75</sup> In speaking primarily of the role of the principal, he said,

How do you impart this feeling of warmth, interest, and concern to your staff? The principal who is not too busy to say "Good Morning" or to ask how the new baby is or whether the new textbooks have arrived shows that he is interested and concerned. In such little ways, rapport is developed with fellow employees. Concern and interest are also

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>75</sup>Richard F. Felicetti, "Are You Communicating Internally," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 58 (January 1974): 22.

evident when you are willing to listen, when you are sympathetic to problems, when you try to help them secure needed materials, and when you ask for their opinion.<sup>76</sup>

In addressing the actual job of implementing the internal communications plans, Bagin et al. offered the administrator the following suggestions for encouraging two-way communication:

Eat lunch with various staff members as often as possible. This will enable them to see you as another person interested in the school -- another person who wants to talk about problems and possible solutions. Follow up lunch discussions with memos noting action taken as a result of teacher suggestions.

Establish a staff advisory committee. Don't load it with friends favorable to the administration's ideas; let it be representative of the staff, perhaps elected by them. Meet with this group on a regular basis. And make the group available on short notice to discuss problems at the call of the principal or any members. Encourage people to speak out at these meetings. The administrator who can do this often solves problems when they are in their embryonic stages, thereby avoiding crises.

Encourage all staff to let administrators know about problems or potential problems. Communicate the feeling that every employee is responsible for making the school better. Be available to staff members. Secretaries shouldn't surround administrators with a protective shield that renders them inaccessible.

Place suggestion boxes in easily accessible locations throughout buildings. Encourage all staff members -- not just teachers -- to use these boxes to improve whatever they can in their building.

Have a memo book near teachers' mailboxes. Teachers can ask questions or make suggestions in the morning, and by the end of the day an administrator's responses should be next to their suggestions.

Go back to staff members who make suggestions or ask questions. One of the most frustrating feelings for an employee is to make a suggestion or ask a question that is never reacted to. If it can be implemented, fine; if it can't, explain why. In any event, encourage additional suggestions.

Survey via a questionnaire how the faculty feels about the

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.

communication flow. Ask for reactions to current attempts and suggestions for improvement.<sup>77</sup>

In order to establish better internal communications among the school staff by means of written communications, the following activities were recommended by Bagin:

Give all employees a copy of any publication before it is sent to the general public.

Distribute a one-page wrap-up of the school board's actions the morning after the meeting. Include information germane to the staff; omit insignificant information. Be factual; don't use the publication as a propaganda vehicle.

Include a small, one-page information sheet with each paycheck. Include a calendar of events, important messages to staff, and items of educational interest appearing in the mass media.

Prepare an internal newsletter or newssheet for all staff members. It should keep them informed about the district's accomplishments, plans and programs.

Distribute a faculty handbook each year to each faculty member. To minimize the awesomeness of this policy book, there should be a summary of key topics.

To avoid misunderstandings that could cause severe problems, communicate the district's policy on reappointment and tenure. Set the guidelines used for observation. Also, show some organizational table so the new person knows the proper person to see about a concern.

Prepare an easy-to-follow explanation of the employee's paycheck. Explain each deduction in terms that he can understand. This should be placed in the handbook, and a copy should accompany the first check.

Include a map of the school in some early publication if the building is large enough to justify it. Often students have such maps but faculty members don't.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison, School Communications, pp. 32-33.

<sup>78</sup>Bagin, PR Programs, p. 20.

### External Communications

External communications have to do with communicating with the public or the people in American society. It is a well-established principle of American life that the public schools belong to the people and that the people have a right to be informed about and involved in the schools. Jones has emphasized this point in stating,

Because public schools are owned and operated by the people of the state and of the local community, there is an obligation on the part of the board of education, administrative officers, and other school employees to take the public into their confidence and to provide them with the information they need in order that they understand the total educational program. The public must be made aware of the opportunities that are available for their participation in the total social task of making good schools even better.<sup>79</sup>

School administrators are apparently going to have to deal with citizen participation in the schools. Writing of this certainty, McCloskey stated,

First, citizen interest and some types of participation are inevitable. Education is so closely related to other aspects of living that educators could not prevent citizen participation even if they foolishly should desire to do so. With or without our willing it, and despite any fears we may have, citizens will continue to think, speak, and act. We should help them do so constructively.<sup>80</sup>

Calling for school administrators to develop skills in better understanding their communities, Conway, Jennings, and Milstein stated that,

It is infinitely better to have a feeling for the positions of individuals and groups in the community regarding policy matters before a course of action is decided upon than to make decisions

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<sup>79</sup>Jones, School Public Relations, p. v.

<sup>80</sup>McCloskey, Education and Public Understanding, p. 338.

and then be abruptly and unhappily confronted by community dissatisfactions.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the school administrator's general task relative to external communications seems clear. As Fusco stated, ". . . the school administrator, carrying out his primary objective of improving the educational opportunities of all children and youth, is obligated to maintain an effective school-community relations program."<sup>82</sup>

However, as has been noted previously, educators are generally untrained in the art of effective communications with the public. Fortunately, there appears to be an increased awareness of the need for better school public relations and communications. Speaking of this trend, Ascough stated,

For years, school administrators have said that public relations is important. Unfortunately, they didn't do much more than say it.

But like a beautiful spring after a long hard winter, the decade of the '70s has brought a blossoming of PR efforts . . . Perhaps the credit could go to societal change, particularly demands for schools to be accountable and more responsive.<sup>83</sup>

If external communication is to be effective, it must have feedback from community to the school officials and the communication must be two-way. Bagin has asserted that when school officials are asked about the system's external communications efforts they typically mention news releases and newsletters or other written, one-way communications methods. He stated,

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<sup>81</sup>James A. Conway, Robert E. Jennings, and Mike M. Milstein, Understanding Communities, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. xi.

<sup>82</sup>Fusco, School-Community Relations, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup>Larry Ascough, "Trends in Building-Level PR," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 58 (January 1974): 69.

Seldom will the school official talk about the way he gets feedback -- the methods he uses to determine what the public is thinking about the schools.

Ask any communications expert about effective communication. He'll emphasize the importance of constant feedback and two-way communication. Thus, the schoolman who wants to communicate must identify his audiences and know how to listen to them. This is so vital to the over-all communications program that ideally it should precede all other phases.<sup>84</sup>

In order to establish an effective two-way continuous feedback program of external communication, Bagin et al. offered the following suggestions:

Establish advisory committees. Have one for each audience. For instance, set up an advisory committee for students, one for faculty, and another of lay citizens.

Select key communicators. These are people at the top of the communications pyramid in a community.

Invite taxpayers to lunch. In an informal atmosphere, eating cafeteria food, the taxpayers can discuss school matters.

Listen to what's said at meetings of service groups. People who belong to these organizations often talk with many others in the community.

Distribute wallet-size calendars to residents. In addition to key school dates and general information about the schools, include a phone number to be called for information or to check a rumor.

Get people's ideas on tape. Provide tape recorders throughout school buildings during events such as parent conferences and Back-to-School Night and school activities such as basketball games plays. Their availability and use should be explained, encouraging people to make suggestions for the improvement of the school.

Listen to local radio call-in shows. Often one crank call won't mean much, but a series of calls showing concern about a topic will alert the administrator that some explanation or action is required.

Include a question session at public meetings. By formally

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<sup>84</sup>Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison, School Communications, p. 10.



establishing such a procedure, the administrator will demonstrate that he encourages questions and suggestions.

Offer guidance and administrative services at night occasionally.

Establish a community resource file. By bringing people to the schools to speak to classes or assemblies, you involve them in "their schools."

Have a switchboard operator keep a list of common questions.

Read church bulletins and work with the local clergy.

Establish a speakers' bureau. By offering free speakers as a service, the district engenders solid rapport with local organizations.

Include questionnaires in newsletters sent to the public.

Note questions asked by reporters at news conferences and after board meetings. These questions represent the thinking of not only the reporters but community residents.

Be candid with town officials and civic leaders. In turn, these people will express what is concerning them and their groups.

Distribute golden age cards to residents over 60 or 65. These cards allow residents to attend free such school activities as sports events and plays.

Have a forum once a month. Invite students, parents, administrators, teachers, and taxpayers. Encourage people to come up with questions that will lead to answers that make schools better.<sup>85</sup>

#### Relationship with the News Media

Relationship with the news media was a major topic in much of the literature concerning school public relations. Concerning the importance of the media, McCloskey stated that,

The free press was deliberately conceived as the Fourth Estate -- a branch of government having responsibilities equal to those of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. In accord with that concept, news media have a right to obtain and publish facts about the ways public services, including schools, are conducted.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Bagin, Grazian, and Harrison, School Communications, pp. 11-14.

<sup>86</sup>McCloskey, Education and Public Understanding, p. 433.

Mullins argued that school systems cannot afford to ignore the power of the news media. Speaking of their important role in school affairs, she contended,

It can rally public opinion in your favor or turn it against you at the drop of an adjective. It can help win a referendum or bring one down to shattering defeat. It can turn the most capable and efficient board of education into a pack of bumbling, incompetent clods -- or seem to. It can be your best friend or pure acid, but it is a fact of public life, and boards must learn to cope with it.<sup>87</sup>

Unruh and Willier, in a discussion of building good press relations, offered among their suggestions to educators the following:

Good human relations are the basis of a good press relationship. School personnel should plan news coverage with the editor and his reporters.

There should be daily, personal contact between school people and reporters, especially reporters who have been assigned to the school system.

Good human relations practices require that the reporter be treated with courtesy and respect.

The reporter must be dealt with honestly and fairly.<sup>88</sup>

### Summary

The review of selected literature in school public relations has been presented in this chapter under the following major divisions: (1) the development of public relations; (2) the development of school public relations; (3) the school public relations program; (4) internal

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<sup>87</sup>Carolyn Mullins, "How to Get Along With Your Local Newspaper and How to get Good Press, Too," American School Board Journal 160 (October 1973): p. 31.

<sup>88</sup>Adolph Unruh and Robert A. Willier, Public Relations for Schools (Belmont, California: Lear Siegler, Inc./Fearon Publishers, 1974), pp. 83-84.

communications; and (5) external communications.

The next chapter will present data collected from the 142 public school units in North Carolina.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### Methodology

##### General Concepts

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of the public relations programs implemented in the public school units in North Carolina. The study was further concerned with determining the role of the State Department of Public Instruction in offering support and assistance to the district level public relations programs.

##### Population Design for the Study

Data were collected from all of the public school units in the state of North Carolina. The 1984-1985 Education Directory for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction confirmed that there were 142 public school administrative units operating within the one hundred counties in North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> Each of the 142 administrative units has been assigned by the State Board of Education to one of the eight educational districts.

##### Preparation of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire, used as the data-gathering instrument, was developed from a review of literature and from personal conversations

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<sup>1</sup>Education Directory, 1984-1985 (Raleigh, North Carolina: State Department of Public Instruction), p. 118.

and interviews with Tom I. Davis, Special Assistant to the State Superintendent, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction,<sup>2</sup> and with J. Peter (Pete) Andrews, president of the North Carolina School Public Relations Association.<sup>3</sup>

Each year, the Department of Public Instruction updates its mailing list to the individual school units by asking school superintendents to designate the individual responsible for the public relations program in the respective school units. During the review of literature, while preparation was being made for the development of the questionnaire, the investigator discussed the purposes of the study with Dr. A. Craig Phillips, State Superintendent of Public Instruction.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequent conversations with Dr. Phillips, with Tom I. Davis, Special Assistant to the Superintendent,<sup>5</sup> and with Jane Gregory,<sup>6</sup> Information Coordinator, State Department of Public Instruction, resulted in an agreement that the questionnaire to be developed by the investigator would be a joint project. The questionnaire would

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<sup>2</sup>Interview with Tom I. Davis, State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, North Carolina, 5 October 1984.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with J. Peter Andrews, Raleigh, North Carolina, 10 October 1984.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Dr. A. Craig Phillips, Raleigh, North Carolina, 15 October 1984 and 24 October 1984.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with Tom I. Davis, State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, North Carolina, 31 October 1984.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Jane Gregory, State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2 November 1984.

include several questions that would seek information the State Department of Public Instruction needed in order to evaluate and improve its services to individual units. In return for the development of the questionnaire and the analysis of the data received, the questionnaire and any necessary follow-ups would be sent to the individual school units from the State Department of Public Instruction.

Discussion of the purposes of the study with the Board of Directors of the North Carolina School Public Relations Association resulted in a request by the Public Relations Association for a comprehensive analysis of the data from the study. The data, especially the needs defined by the district level public relations practitioners, will be used for future workshops, seminars, and annual meetings.

From a review of literature, from suggestions made by personnel with the Division of Information and Publications, and from suggestions made by members of the North Carolina School Public Relations Association, a four-page questionnaire was designed. One individual with the Division of Information and Publications and three members of the North Carolina School Public Relations Association were asked to review and evaluate the contents of the proposed questionnaire and to submit suggestions for changes to the investigator. Upon completion of the field test, the questionnaire was revised (Appendix A) to include the suggested changes.

The questionnaire was divided into three main sections. Section I of the questionnaire was designed to gather personal information concerning the public information officer along with information about the school system. The major purposes of the section were to determine who is responsible for the local public relations program and to determine the educational background and training of the public relations designee. Key questions in the subsection concerning the school system were designed to determine the number of people on the systemwide public relations staff, to determine how the program is evaluated, and to determine the best and strongest program components as defined by the local school unit.

Section II of the questionnaire was designed as a checklist to gather information with reference to the components of the public relations program within the school units. Items in the checklist were derived from the review of literature and suggestions made by personnel with the State Department of Public Instruction.

Section III of the questionnaire was designed to determine the usefulness of materials distributed to school units by the State Department of Public Instruction. The section was also designed to provide an opportunity, through an open-ended question, for individuals to detail ways in which the State Department of Public Instruction could be helpful in supporting the public relations program in the 142 school units in North Carolina.

### Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire and a letter of introduction (Appendix B) were distributed through the courier system of the State Department of Public Instruction to the local school information officers in the school units in North Carolina. Questionnaires were sent the second week in November of 1984 and a request was made for the questionnaires to be returned by November 30, 1984. A total of ninety-two questionnaires were received from the first request. A second letter and another copy of the form were sent on December 18, 1984, to the fifty local school information officers who did not respond to the first questionnaire. An additional thirty-two responses were received from the second questionnaire, bringing the total number of responses to 124.

Because of the importance of the information to the State Department of Public Instruction, especially the information on the first page of the questionnaire, the eighteen school systems not responding to the questionnaire were called by the investigator or by personnel with the State Department of Public Instruction. Responses continued to be sent to Raleigh and the last response of the 142 units was received on January 30, 1985.

### Treatment of the Data

The data collected through the questionnaire were reviewed and analyzed through counting, sorting, and ranking procedures.



### Analysis of the Data

The first section of the questionnaire for public information officers was designed to identify the individual school system's public information officer and to define the educational background and special training of the individuals responsible for the district level public relations program. Six blank lines were included as the first part and as the first two major items on the questionnaire so that the public information officers could list the name of the school system along with the correct address, telephone number, and courier number. Subsequent lines provided space for the name of the locally designated public information officer along with the title given to the practitioner at the local level.

Titles given by the respondents to the survey are as follows:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of practitioners with title</u>
Superintendent	10
Associate Superintendent	2
Assistant Superintendent	7
Assistant to the Superintendent	3
Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent	2
Public Relations Coordinator	1
Public Information Officer	8
Supervisor of Public Affairs	1
Director of Public Relations	1
Finance Officer	1
Community Schools/Public Information Officer	4
Community Schools - Coordinator or Director	64
Student Services Coordinator	1
Elementary Coordinator	1
General Supervisor	1

Director of Instruction	3
Director of Support Services and Federal Programs	1
Supervisor of Pupil Personnel	1
Audio-visual Coordinator or Director	1
Secondary Coordinator	1
Director of Compensatory Education and Community Relations	1
Director of Health and Community Relations	1
Director of Staff Development and Curriculum Coordinator	1
Director of Personnel Services and Public Information	1
Media Coordinator	1
Secretary/Public Information Officer	1
Secretary/Bookkeeper	1
Executive Secretary	1

Responses to item three indicated the following degrees for individuals assigned public relations duties within the school systems:

<u>Degree</u>	<u>Number</u>
No Degree	6
Associate's	1
Bachelor's	52
Master's	53
Specialist's	19
Doctor's	11

Item four concerned the major and minor subject areas studied by the public relations practitioners during their educational training. The subject areas indicated by the respondents include:

<u>Bachelor's Degree</u>	<u>Number</u>
Language Arts/English	17
Health and Physical Education	14

Grammar Grades	3
Primary Education	7
Home Economics	2
Mathematics	4
Elementary Education	5
Criminal Justice	1
Geology	1
Music	3
Biology	1
Social Studies	3
Counselor Education	1
Industrial Arts	1
Art	1
Journalism	5
Agriculture Education	1
Social Work	1
Communications	7
Radio/TV	2
Science	2
French	1
Business	1

<u>Master's Degree</u>	<u>Number</u>
Administration	21
Education	7
Supervision	10
Community Education	3
Industrial Arts	2
Divinity/Religion	1
Music	2
<u>Doctor's Degree</u>	<u>Number</u>
Administration	8

Item five concerned certification of the public relations practitioner. Certification indicated by the respondents include:

<u>Certification</u>	<u>Number</u>
No Certification	25
Administration	47
Teacher	56
Other	8

Item six requested a listing of any special training or experiences in public relations other than college training the practitioner might have had. A total of fifty-seven respondents indicated they had had no special training other than college work. A total of twenty-three indicated they had attended various public relations workshops, mainly those conducted by the North Carolina School Public Relations Association. The following special training areas were listed at least once in responses to item seven:

Special Training Areas

Newspaper work  
Work in the Air Force  
Public relations work with a power company  
Work in the U. S. Army  
Certified commercial artist  
Public relations assistant for a college  
Television work  
Public relations work for a performing arts center  
Work in the U. S. Navy  
Work with a Chamber of Commerce  
Work with the Girl Scouts  
Work with a college alumni association  
Work in show business  
Public relations with a Boys Club  
Work in corporate public relations  
Licensed real estate broker  
Training in motel and restaurant management  
Work with a radio station  
Work with an insurance agency

Item seven addressed the status of the position of the public relations practitioner in terms of full-time, half-time, or less than half-time. Respondents indicated that ninety-seven (73%) were full-time; fifteen (9%) were half-time; and twenty (15%) were less than half-time.

Item eight asked to whom the public information officer reported. Respondents indicated that 115 answer directly to the superintendent. Twenty-seven respondents indicated they answer to individuals other than the superintendent. The twenty-seven respondents indicated they report to the following:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Number</u>
Associate superintendent	8
Assistant superintendent	6
Board of education	10
Director of special programs	1
Administrative assistant	1
Community schools coordinator	1

Item nine asked for a list of professional communications organizations to which the practitioners belonged. The organizations listed by the respondents include the following:

<u>Organizations</u>	<u>Number</u>
North Carolina School Public Relations Association (NCSPRA)	67
National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)	27
North Carolina Association for Community Education (NCACE)	2
North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA)	4
American Association of School Administrators (AASA)	2
North Carolina Press Club	1
North Carolina Press Association	1
North Carolina Association of Educators	3
North Carolina School Volunteer Program (NCSVP)	1
Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)	1
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)	1
North Carolina Association of Education Office Personnel (NCAEOP)	1

Item ten, the last question in the section dealing specifically with the public relations practitioner, asked if the respondent had responsibilities for the Community Schools Program. A total of eighty-one (57%) indicated they were responsible for the Community Schools Program and fifty-one (36%) indicated they did not have responsibilities for the program.

Part B in Section I dealt specifically with the school system. Item 1 asked for the size of public relations staff. Respondents indicated the following number of staff members for the various school units:

<u>Staff Members</u>	<u>Number of Units</u>
1	86
1 1/2	26
2	9
3	2
11	1

Forty-nine individuals work with local school units in capacities that would be considered as less than half-time and 57 volunteers assist with the various public relations programs.

Item 2 asked whether the school district's public relations program is evaluated annually. A total of 71 or (50%) indicated that the school district's public relations program is evaluated annually. A total of 54 or (38%) indicated that the school district's public relations program is not evaluated at least on an annual basis. Part

of the question for Item 2 asked how the program is evaluated. Respondents indicated the following evaluation procedures:

How Program is Evaluated

Outside consultants	0
Written Evaluation by the Public	
Information Director	16
Written Evaluation by the Superintendent	29
Performance Appraisal	8
Informal Evaluation	11
State Accreditation	8

The last question in Section I asked for a listing of programs, publications, or communications programs the individual school unit believed to be its best or strongest areas. Every school unit listed at least one program or publication. These listings will be shared with the North Carolina School Public Relations Association and with the State Department of Public Instruction so that workshops, seminars, and other meetings can be planned around successful practices in North Carolina.

For the purposes of this study, the information included in Item 3 was classified according to programs and publications for the internal public, or employees and students inside the school system, or to programs and publications for the external public. Of the 821 successful programs, publications, and practices listed by the various school units, a total of 520 (63%) were designed for or directed toward the external public. A total of 301 (37%) were designed for or directed toward the internal public, namely the students or school employees.

The second section of the questionnaire for public information officers was designed to detail the components of the district level public relations programs. Respondents were asked to mark the items they do on a regular basis as part of the public relations programs. The program components and the number of public information practitioners indicating the various components as part of their regular district level public relations program include the following:

Staff newsletter	70
Community newsletter	32
Parent newsletter	29
Parent/community newsletter	37
Board meeting agendas	45
Board meeting highlights/follow-up	51
School calendar	88
Annual report	72
Personnel handbook	46
Special brochures	90
News releases	115
Radio programs	60
Communications/public relations workshops	46
Community surveys	59
Tip sheet for media	34
Newspaper supplements	50
Newspaper clippings	54
Preparation of audio visual materials	51
Photography	87
Programs for community groups	85
Preparation of slide/tape programs	60
Building level newsletters	19
Work with local realtors	44
Plan special displays	63
Write speeches, resolutions, etc.	66
Work with individual schools on various problems	78

Components of the district level public relations programs are detailed by region on the following eight charts.



Region 1	Beaufort	Camden	Dare	Hyde	Perquimans	Tyrrell	Washington County	Edenton-Chowan	Gates	Martin	Pitt	Bertie	Currituck	Hertford	Pasquotank	Greenville	Washington City		
ACTIVITIES																			
staff newsletter	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		
community newsletter		X											X			X			
parent newsletter					X						X								
parent/community newsletter					X				X					X		X			
board meeting agendas					X			X		X	X			X	X				
board meeting highlights follow up					X			X	X					X	X				
school calendar	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		
annual report	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X		
personnel handbook	X	X			X			X											
special brochures	X		X		X			X		X	X				X	X	X		
news releases	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
radio programs								X		X	X	X			X		X		
communication/public relations workshops										X	X					X			
community surveys			X		X			X		X		X	X		X	X			
tip sheet for media								X			X	X					X		
newspaper supplements					X			X			X	X			X				
newspaper clippings to staff members					X		X	X		X		X							
preparation of audiovisual materials					X			X		X	X						X		
photography		X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		
programs for community groups	X				X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
preparation of slide/tape programs					X			X			X					X	X		
building level newsletters					X					X									
work with local realtors										X	X								
plan special displays								X		X	X	X			X		X		
write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.	X		X				X	X	X	X	X				X				
work with individual schools on problems	X		X				X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		
other																			

[illegible]

Region 3	Wake	Durham City	Franklin	Halifax	Johnston	Northampton	Durham County	Tarboro	Granville	Weldon	Rocky Mt.	Edgecombe	Franklinton City	Roanoke Rapids	Nash	Wilson	Vance	Warren
ACTIVITIES																		
staff newsletter	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	
community newsletter				X					X	X				X				
parent newsletter					X			X		X	X	X				X		
parent/community newsletter	X					X			X	X							X	
board meeting agendas							X	X			X							
board meeting highlights follow up				X		X	X	X	X		X				X			
school calendar	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	
annual report	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X			X			
personnel handbook				X	X			X	X		X	X	X					
special brochures	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
news releases	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
radio programs		X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X		X			X	
communication/public relations workshops		X		X		X	X		X		X				X		X	
community surveys		X	X	X		X			X	X	X		X					
tip sheet for media	X	X	X			X			X									
newspaper supplements			X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X				
newspaper clippings to staff members	X		X		X			X	X		X		X	X	X		X	
preparation of audiovisual materials		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		
photography	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
programs for community groups		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
preparation of slide/tape programs		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		
building level newsletters											X						X	
work with local realtors	X	X					X		X		X							
plan special displays	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X					
work with individual schools on problems		X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
other																		

Region 4	Bladen	Cumberland	Hoke	Moore	Fairmont	St. Pauls	Columbus	Fayetteville	Lee	Richmond	Lumberton	Scotland	Whiteville	Harnett	Montgomery	Robeson	Red Springs	
ACTIVITIES																		
staff newsletter			X	X		X		X	X	X						X	X	
community newsletter													X					
parent newsletter												X					X	
parent/community newsletter		X				X				X		X						
board meeting agendas				X							X	X					X	
board meeting highlights follow up										X	X	X				X		
school calendar		X	X	X		X				X	X	X	X		X		X	
annual report						X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X		
personnel handbook			X	X	X				X		X	X			X		X	
special brochures	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X		
news releases	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
radio programs				X					X	X	X	X			X		X	
communication/public relations workshops	X			X	X													
community surveys			X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X			X			
tip sheet for media				X	X										X	X		
newspaper supplements	X			X	X				X			X						
newspaper clippings to staff members	X			X				X			X	X			X	X	X	
preparation of audiovisual materials			X	X				X	X	X		X				X		
photography	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X		
programs for community groups			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X			
preparation of slide/tape programs			X	X			X					X						
building level newsletters												X						
work with local realtors								X	X	X		X						
plan special displays				X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X			
write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.		X		X						X		X	X		X			
work with individual schools on problems	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		
other																		

Region 5 ACTIVITIES	Alamance	Chatham	Burlington City	Davidson County	Caswell	Lexington	Thomasville	Greensboro	Chapel Hill	Asheboro	Western Rockingham	Winston-Salem	High Point	Person County	Rockingham	Reidsville	Gulford	Orange	Randolph	Eden City	Stokes
staff newsletter		X		X		X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X			X		
community newsletter						X			X												
parent newsletter					X	X							X								
parent/community newsletter		X	X			X					X	X					X				X
board meeting agendas	X	X							X				X				X			X	X
board meeting highlights follow up	X		X	X					X			X		X	X						X
school calendar		X		X	X				X			X			X	X	X			X	
annual report			X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X
personnel handbook	X			X	X					X		X			X		X				
special brochures		X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
news releases	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
radio programs			X			X		X				X					X		X		
communication/public relations workshops						X		X	X		X			X			X	X	X		
community surveys			X					X	X		X		X		X			X	X		
tip sheet for media			X			X		X					X				X		X		X
newspaper supplements						X		X					X						X		X
newspaper clippings to staff members		X				X			X						X		X		X		X
preparation of audiovisual materials	X								X		X	X					X		X		X
photography	X		X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X
programs for community groups			X			X			X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X
preparation of slide/tape programs			X			X			X			X	X				X		X		
building level newsletters						X									X						
work with local realtors			X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X		X		
plan special displays	X		X			X						X	X			X	X		X		
write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.	X	X				X		X	X		X		X		X		X	X	X		X
work with individual schools on problems	X		X			X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X		
other																					

Region 6	Salisbury City	Stanly	Monroe	Kings Mt.	Cleveland	Union	Albermarle	Lincoln	Shelby	Kannapolis	Rowan	Cabarrus	Anson	Gaston	Charlotte-Mecklenburg				
ACTIVITIES																			
staff newsletter	X	X		X		X		X	X		X		X		X				
community newsletter	X	X							X			X	X						
parent newsletter		X					X		X			X	X		X				
parent/community newsletter						X			X			X							
board meeting agendas	X					X	X	X		X			X		X				
board meeting highlights follow up	X					X		X	X						X				
school calendar	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X				
annual report	X		X	X		X			X		X								
personnel handbook	X		X			X	X	X	X	X									
special brochures	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X		X				
news releases	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				
radio programs	X		X		X	X			X			X	X						
communication/public relations workshops			X			X			X			X			X				
community surveys	X		X	X		X			X										
tip sheet for media			X			X	X								X				
newspaper supplements			X	X		X		X	X	X									
newspaper clippings to staff members			X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X						
preparation of audiovisual materials	X				X	X			X	X					X				
photography	X	X	X	X		X			X	X		X	X						
programs for community groups	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x				
preparation of slide/tape programs	x		x		x				x	x	x				x				
building level newsletters	x								X	X									
work with local realtors	X		X		X	X			X	X		X			X				
plan special displays	X		X	X		X		X	X			X	X		X				
write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.	X		X		X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X				
work with individual schools on problems	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X				
other																			

Region 7	Alexander	Avery	Catawba	Davie	Statesville	Mt. Airy	Yadkin	Alleghany	Burke	Hickory City	Iredell	Surry	Watauga	Ashe	Caldwell	Newton-Conover	Mooresville	Elkin	Wilkes
ACTIVITIES																			
staff newsletter	X	X	X						X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X
community newsletter		X				X								X			X	X	X
parent newsletter	X	X	X			X						X		X	X				X
parent/community newsletter		X										X		X			X		X
board meeting agendas			X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X			X		X
board meeting highlights follow up		X	X							X				X	X		X		X
school calendar	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
annual report	X	X		X	X								X	X	X		X		X
personnel handbook		X		X	X	X						X		X	X		X		
special brochures	X				X							X	X	X	X		X	X	X
news releases		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
radio programs	X	X	X	X		X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X			
communication/public relations workshops		X	X	X											X		X		X
community surveys		X	X	X		X	X			X				X	X		X	X	X
tip sheet for media												X	X	X	X		X		
newspaper supplements		X		X				X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
newspaper clippings to staff members					X	X				X						X			X
preparation of audiovisual materials						X						X		X	X	X	X		X
photography	X	X										X		X	X	X	X	X	X
programs for community groups				X		X	X		X			X	X		X	X	X		X
preparation of slide/tape programs	X			X								X		X	X	X	X		X
building level newsletters		X								X									X
work with local realtors					X	X									X		X	X	X
plan special displays		X								X			X		X	X	X		X
write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.				X		X				X			X		X			X	X
work with individual schools on problems				X		X			X			X		X	X	X	X	X	
other																			

Region 8	Buncombe	Clay	Henderson	Macon	Mitchell	Rutherford	Yancy	Asheville City	Graham	Hendersonville City	Madison	Polk	Swain	Cherokee	Haywood	Jackson	McDowell	Tryon City	Transylvania County
ACTIVITIES																			
staff newsletter	X					X		X			X			X	X				
community newsletter		X			X			X		X		X	X	X				X	
parent newsletter					X							X					X		
parent/community newsletter								X		X									X
board meeting agendas	X						X	X			X		X	X	X			X	
board meeting highlights follow up	X						X	X					X	X	X				
school calendar	X	X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
annual report	X	X		X		X		X	X					X	X				X
personnel handbook	X							X			X	X		X	X		X		X
special brochures	X		X	X		X		X	X			X	X	X	X		X		X
news releases	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
radio programs	X	X	X	X		X				X			X	X	X				X
communication/public relations workshops	X		X		X														
community surveys	X				X				X	X	X		X	X	X	X			
tip sheet for media	X		X				X	X	X										
newspaper supplements	X	X		X			X	X	X				X						X
newspaper clippings to staff members	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X		X						
preparation of audiovisual materials	X			X									X				X		
photography	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X			X		
programs for community groups	X				X				X	X	X	X	X	X					X
preparation of slide/tape programs	X	X	X						X	X			X	X			X		X
building level newsletters	X													X					
work with local realtors	X							X	X	X									X
plan special displays	X			X	X	X			X			X	X	X			X		
write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.							X		X			X		X		X			
work with individual schools on problems	X			X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X
other	X			X								X							



Section III of the questionnaire was designed to determine the usefulness of materials distributed to school units by the State Department of Public Instruction. The section was also designed to provide an opportunity, through two open-ended questions, for public relations practitioners to detail ways in which the State Department of Public Instruction could be helpful in supporting the public relations programs in the 142 school units. An additional question asked respondents to list any books or publications that were particularly helpful to them as a public relations practitioner.

Item A in section III asked respondents to check the various publications they received from the State Department of Public Instruction and to indicate the helpfulness of the publications. The respondents indicated the following:

<u>Publication</u>	<u>Receive</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Not Helpful</u>
Inform	107 (75%)	93	6	
SBE Highlights	102 (72%)	86	10	1
Memo	107 (75%)	91	9	
News Releases	84 (59%)	73	8	
Schedule of Activities	92 (65%)	79	6	1
State and National Education Reports	73 (51%)	60	8	
Regional Reports	66 (46%)	51	13	

Item B asked respondents to check those items for which it would be helpful to have background information and the name of a contact person. The number of individuals who indicated they would like to

have more information concerning the various programs is as follows:

Teacher of the Year	64
Secondary Principal of the Year	52
Scholars Program	70
National School Recognition Program	67
Bus Driver Safety Awards	73
Programs of Excellence	75
Children's Trust Fund	44
Accreditation	41
Career Development	57
Dropout Prevention	64
N. C. Close-Up	44
U. S. Senate Youth	40
Scholarships for Teachers	66
Scholarships for Students	50
Science Competition	54
Math Competition	52
Business/Industry Involvement	54
Governor's School	30
Child Find	28

Item C in section III asked respondents to list any books or publications that were particularly helpful to them in their work as a public relations practitioner. The following books and publications were listed as the most helpful materials:

Kindred, Leslie W. Bagin, Don. The School and Community Relations. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1984.

Arnold, Edmund. Arnold's Ancient Axioms: Typography for Publications Editors. Chicago: Ragan Communications. 1978.

Bagin, Don. School Communications Ideas That Work. Chicago: Nations Schools Press, 1972.

Robinson, Thomas E. 101 Public Relations Activities for Schools. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, 1976.

Statistical Profile. Raleigh, North Carolina: State Department of Public Instruction, published yearly.

Education Directory. Raleigh, North Carolina. State Department of Public Instruction, published yearly.

- Berridge, Robert I. Training the Community Educator. New York: Pendell Publishing, Co. 1977.
- Russell, Diane. Public Relations Handbook for Community Education. Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing, Co. 1976.
- Beach, Mark. Editing Your Newsletter. Portland, Oregon: Coast to Coast Books, 1982.
- Ragan, Lawrence. Organizational Press. Chicago: Ragan Communications, 1981.
- White, Jan V. Mastering Graphics. New York: Bowker Press, 1983.
- Ogilvy, David. Ogilvy on Advertising. New York: Crown Publishing, 1981.
- Barzi, Jacques. Simple and Direct: A Rhetoric for Writers. New York: Atheneum Press, 1965.
- Kett, Merrilyn Kett. How to Avoid Sexism in Writing. Chicago: Ragan Communications, 1978.
- Zielar, Zig. See You at the Top. Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 1974.
- McPhail, Elizabeth C. Motivation Plus. Manhattan, Kansas: Master Teacher, 1983.
- Faber, Adele. How to Talk So Kids Will Listen. New York: Rawson Associates, 1980.
- Jones, William L. Building Public Confidence in Your Schools. Arlington, Virginia: National School Public Relations Association, 1978.
- Lem, Dean P. Graphics Master. Los Angeles, California: Lem Associates, 1984.
- Cutlip, Scott M. Effective Public Relations. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985.
- Zinsser, William. On Writing Well. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.
- Arnold, Edmund. Designing the Total Newspaper. New York: Harper & Row, 1981.
- Walling, Donovan R. Complete Book of School Public Relations. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1982.

All publications of the National School Public Relations Association,  
1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia. 22209

Journal of Educational Public Relations

Educational Communication Center  
P. O. Box 657  
1830 Walnut Street  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania 17011

Communications Briefings

Encoders, Inc.  
806 Westminister Blvd.  
Blackwood, New Jersey 08012

Basic School PR Kit

Produced by the National School Public Relations Association

Paragraphs

Publication of the National School Public Relations Association

Editor's Workshop

Newsletter of the Public Relations Society of America

Public Relations Journal

Public Relations Society of America  
845 Third Avenue  
New York, New York 10022

Education USA

Publication of the National School Public Relations Association

Ragan Report

Newsletter published by Lawrence Ragan Communications  
407 S. Dearborn Street  
Chicago, Illinois

It Starts in the Classroom

Publication of the National School Public Relations Association

How to Evaluate Your PR Program

Publication of the National School Public Relations Association

The Associated Press Style Book

The final question in Section III asked practitioners to detail ways in which the Division of Information and Communication could be of help to them in their work. Suggestions made by the respondents can be summarized into three broad areas.

First, the public relations practitioners would like to have a constant flow of information coming from the State Department of Public Instruction. They would like to have the information as early as possible. For instance, they would like statewide data on testing before local figures are released. Practitioners would like to have the information sent directly to the public information officers. Other suggestions include more emphasis on trends in education and forecasting of trends. They also suggested that information from various areas (testing, child nutrition, etc.) include a name and number so that public information officers could ask for additional information when they need additional information.

Second, the public relations practitioners would like the Division of Information and Communication to work directly with superintendents in explaining the communications process and in stressing the need for additional personnel and additional funding. Practitioners working with the community schools program listed personnel as one of their greatest needs; practitioners who did not have responsibilities for the community schools program listed funding as one of their greatest needs.

Third, public relations practitioners would like to have more workshops and staff development designed to help in areas of the various programs in which they are experiencing difficulties. Particular areas listed by the practitioners include graphics, marketing, developing slide/tape presentations, and developing a total public relations program on a "shoestring." Suggestions were given

that these workshops be conducted on statewide and regional levels and that the community schools program and the Division of Information and Communication combine their efforts in the workshops.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUCCESSFUL DISTRICT LEVEL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS: FIVE CASE STUDIES

Excellent school public relations programs can be found throughout North Carolina in both large and small units. Some school units have total programs that blend a variety of public relations practices into a planned, responsive, effective communications program. Other school units have specific program areas or specific projects that have been particularly effective for them. .

The following case studies detail public relations programs for five school units in North Carolina. Units selected for the study include Wake County, Buncombe County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chapel Hill-Carrboro, and Rocky Mount City Schools. These units were selected for case studies because they represent diverse geographical areas; they represent different sizes of school systems; and all five units have received either the Gold Medallion Award of the National School Public Relations Association or the Blue Ribbon Award for Excellence presented by the North Carolina Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association. Both awards are given on a competitive basis and both awards are designed to recognize excellence in public relations. The case studies are based on personal interviews and visits to the school systems.

Case Study Number One<sup>1</sup>  
Wake County Schools

The Wake County School System, with a pupil population of 56,730, is one of the largest school systems in North Carolina. The public relations staff includes the public information officer, a secretary, and a graphic artist.

The Wake County Public School System was formed in 1976 by the merger of the former Raleigh City Schools and the Wake County Schools. The school system, after 1976, experienced a problem common to many metropolitan school districts -- the "suburbanization" of the school-age population. Inner city schools became seriously under-utilized and predominantly black, while suburban schools grew more and more crowded and predominantly white.

Each year the school board struggled with a different student assignment plan it hoped would alleviate the problem. In July 1981, Dr. Walter L. Marks was employed as superintendent. Dr. Marks was given the prime goal of establishing a plan to solve these problems. He proposed that a network of magnet schools be established in the inner city schools. These schools would offer alternative educational programs that would entice some parents to choose to send their children from the overcrowded suburban schools to the inner city schools. While this concept had worked in other areas of the country, it was new to North Carolina. The problem facing the administration was how to convince the general public, a new school board, and the

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Bob Kolin, Wake County Schools, Raleigh, North Carolina, 16 January 1985.



school staffs that this was a workable option and not just an educational fad. As a result of their work, the Wake County School System received a Gold Medallion Award for Excellence in the special topic category for the public relations program implemented in the development of the magnet schools.

In dealing with the new concept, the superintendent and public relations personnel decided to go directly to the general public without the help of the most influential media in the area. In cooperation with the PTA Council, Marks attended a series of large meetings to describe his ideas and answer questions and concerns. In addition, a series of twenty-seven "living room dialogues" were held in private homes throughout the county so that neighborhood concerns could be addressed.

Between August 1981, and March 1982, when the plan was scheduled to be acted on, Marks and other administrators attended smaller PTA meetings at least once in each of the system's eighty-two schools. They also conducted a series of workshops for principals to present the plan and to answer questions from the staff at each school. At every meeting, sample program guides were distributed to help people understand the concept and to invite them to contribute their own ideas.

The plan for the magnet schools was ready in late January 1982. The principals got the first look at the plan and then the plan went to the Board of Education. The plan was presented at a 4 1/2-hour meeting at which 759 people heard about the various aspects of the program

along with the proposed locations of the magnet schools. The next morning, teachers were called to a meeting to receive the same information and copies of the materials sent to the board. All 946 pages of the plan were placed in every school library for public inspection.

Radio and television stations were asked to help. The presentation of the plan was taped and segments were aired by a local station in a thirty-minute special. Marks appeared on a number of public affairs programs on all three local TV stations and on four radio stations. After the school board approved the plan by a 7-2 vote, the public information department produced four radio and four television spots to explain the major points of the plan and to encourage parents to apply. The school district bought radio time to ensure that the messages would be aired during prime time.

Brochures describing each type of magnet school, along with applications, were sent home with all students. All schools were supplied with detailed course description guides, along with extra brochures and application forms. A telephone hotline was established so that people could have their own questions answered by members of the administrative staff. A slide-tape presentation, produced by high school students interested in the magnet schools, was presented to students in all junior and senior high schools and to their parents at separate evening meetings.

As a final promotional effort, "mini-magnets," structured like the actual programs, were established for one day only at each elementary

school designated to become a magnet school. This gave people a chance for a firsthand look at how the school would work.

When the plan was initially adopted the school board had set a goal of 2,500 participants as the minimum before the magnet concept could be considered a success. Between April 12 and April 26, a total of 4,455 applications were received and the deadline was not until May 10. Personnel in Wake County attribute the successful beginning of the magnet schools to the communications program.

#### Case Study Number Two<sup>2</sup> Buncombe County Schools

The Buncombe County School System, located in the western part of the state, has a pupil population of 23,030. The public relations staff includes one full-time individual. Because of the comprehensive nature of the communications program in Buncombe County, the school system received the 1982 Blue Ribbon Award for Excellence presented annually by the North Carolina School Public Relations Association and the 1982 School Press Award for total program. The goals of the Buncombe County communications program include the following:

- To inform the general public about school policies, programs, objectives and future plans.
- To establish and support appropriate and effective two-way communications between the administration and all other school employees.
- To publicize and promote any performances, exhibitions, displays or special programs sponsored by the schools or the school system.

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<sup>2</sup>Interview with Gloria Woodson, Asheville, North Carolina, 23 January 1985.

To prepare publications to inform the internal and external components of the educational system.  
To establish a good working relationship with the news media.  
To create a positive image of schools within Buncombe County and North Carolina.

Dr. N. A. Miller, Superintendent of the Buncombe County Schools, is directly involved in the public information program. He is directly involved on a daily basis by giving direction and advice in every facet of the program. He personally supervised the development of each of the school system's publications. Currently, the school system publications include the following:

- School Directory
- Personnel Handbook
- Annual Report
- Information and Activities Calendar
- Welcome Brochure
- Five-Year Plan Brochure
- Newsletter
- Annual Newspaper Supplement
- Board Meeting Report for Employees
- Teacher Council Report
- Teacher Aide Council Report
- Principals' Council Report
- Assistant Principals' Council Report
- Support Personnel Council Report

Besides the various publications, the school system also has a weekly column of news and a schedule of activities for the week in the Asheville Citizen-Times. The school system also buys advertising space in the local newspaper and answers questions in the advertising space. The questions and answers used in the newspaper advertising space are those questions asked most often by the general public.

The superintendent has established advisory councils in all areas of school district personnel: a teacher council, a teacher aide

council, a principals advisory council, and a support personnel council. The councils were organized to establish appropriate, effective two-way communication between administrators and all school employees. Dr. Miller meets with all groups on a monthly basis in order to answer any questions from the various councils. A written report is sent to all employees following the council meetings.

The superintendent meets on a regular basis with other groups such as student groups, civic groups, and local school advisory councils. He continually encourages two-way communication and reminds staff members that they have an important role to play in building a positive image of the Buncombe County Schools.

The public relations staff of the Buncombe County Schools is currently preparing slide/tape presentations in three areas: curriculum, special services, and migrant education. Long-range plans also call for the preparation of slide/tape programs in the areas of vocational education and preventive maintenance on school equipment.

Even though the organized and planned public relations program in Buncombe County has been in existence only since 1979, the program has received four awards from the National School Public Relations Association, along with three North Carolina School Press Awards. During the 1983-1984 school year, the school system received over 200 requests for copies of the school system's publications from school systems in the United States and Canada.

According to Gloria Woodson, Public Information Director of the Buncombe County Schools, much of the success of the program can be

attributed to the administrative support for comprehensive internal and external programs of communications, along with a dedication by the superintendent and staff to the philosophy that a public informed of the school system's goals and operations will yield greater community support.

Case Study Number Three<sup>3</sup>  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, with a pupil population of 74,559, is the largest school unit in North Carolina. The Communications Department, headed by Associate Superintendent Dr. Chris Folk, includes eleven full-time employees and four employees who work half-time or less. Within the Communications Department are coordinators for school-community relations, community education, and news media relations/publications.

Primary among the department's diverse functions are its day-to-day services involving the general public. Key functions of the department include the following:

The Information Center provides direct telephone service on a twenty-four hour basis. The telephone number of the Center is prominently displayed on all school buses and throughout the school system. Through the services of the Information Center, the public relations staff serves as the first contact for requests, concerns, and inquiries relative to pupil assignment,

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<sup>3</sup>Interview with Shirley Johnson and Myra Joines, Charlotte, North Carolina, 31 January 1985.

bus transportation, curriculum requirements, the school calendar and other matters.

Dial-A-Teacher is a homework hotline for students. Two teams of four teachers work alternate evenings to provide assistance Monday through Thursday (5:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.) for students who need help with their homework. Approximately 140 calls are received each evening.

Information Kits are disseminated upon request to newcomers, realtors, businesses, visitors to the school system, new parents and others seeking information about the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Community Use of Schools is one of the most visible areas of public relations and community services efforts. During the 1983-1984 school year, approximately 570 different organizations used school facilities more than 500,000 hours for activities ranging from youth-sponsored sports teams to college-level classes offered for adults. A joint use agreement between the city and county parks and recreation departments permits school facilities to be used as recreation sites after regular school hours.

Double Oaks Community Service Center is a facility which provides education, recreational, and human service needs. The Center, located in a former elementary school, is a joint venture of the school system and various community agencies. The concept for the center was created and implemented by the communications staff of the school system in cooperation with community residents. The

Center is under direct supervision of the Communications Department.

Resource Assistance is provided by members of the staff who work on local, regional, and state committees. Staff members serve as workshop leaders, speakers, and facilitators. They also provide displays of information at community and education-oriented events.

Publications provide information about and interpretation of the school system's services to its student population. The Communications Department designs publications such as the recruitment brochure, CMS Facts, telephone directory, subject area brochures, board of education brochure, and the school calendar. The Communications Department works closely with other departments in providing subject matter and technical assistance for publications such as the Staff Development News, Senior High School Curriculum Guide, and summer school brochures. The Communications Department prepares audio-visuals such as the annual report, the superintendent's messages to students, staff, and the public. "CMS Update" is a regular program on WTVI. The program explores subjects of various interest about the schools and features the superintendent, staff members, and supporters from parent and community groups.

News Media Memo and Backgrounder are communiqués to the news media and serve as resource documents for education reporters. The weekly News Media Memo provides facts and statistics concerning



major developments and issues, gives suggestions for features, and provides a calendar of coming events with contact people listed for the various programs. The News Media Backgrounder is an annotated version of the agenda for Board of Education meetings.

Coordination of Volunteer Services for the school system is done through the Communications Department. Although most of the volunteers contact schools directly, the Communications Department facilitates matching schools with individuals when such a need arises. Records for volunteers are kept in the community education section of the Communications Department.

According to Dr. Chris Folk and personnel working in the Communications Department in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, the major strengths of the program include

- .The complete support of the Board of Education and superintendent and their responsiveness to the Communications Department's requests
- .The credibility which has been established by the department through confidential and prompt handling of requests, complaints, and concerns both internally and externally
- .The efficient and thorough communications network which exists at every level internally within the school system and which touches key publics externally

A system the size of Charlotte-Mecklenburg may be expected to have a large communications department with a variety of components. Size does not equate to effectiveness. According to Dr. Folk and Shirley Johnson, Community Relations Coordinator, the process of networking within the school system has been the one important element that holds

together the large and complex system of communications within such a large school unit.

Another important element in the effectiveness of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Communications Program is Superintendent Jay Robinson. According to staff members in the Communications Department, Dr. Robinson is a firm believer in the concept that a school system is only as good as the public's perception of the schools. He is a proponent of the public's right to know and is honest with the various publics. He ranks communications as one of his highest priorities and is very sensitive to the needs of both external and internal publics. He sets the tone for the total system through his accessibility to and cooperation with the news media, various community and employee groups and, on a larger scale, state and national requests for information. He constantly reminds employees at all levels that the school system is a public agency and that people have a right to know what is happening in the schools.

#### Case Study Number Four<sup>4</sup> Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

Located in Orange County, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School System has a pupil enrollment of 5,230 students. The goals of the communications program in Chapel Hill include the following:

To identify publics for intensive public information efforts

To assess attitudes and opinion, sources of information and educational priorities of internal and external publics

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with Kim Hoke, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1 February 1985.

To design programs for the systematic process of communicating with internal and external publics.

The public relations program in Chapel Hill as an organized program with a full-time staff member is relatively new. Based on feedback from the 1981-82 meetings of the Superintendent's Advisory Council, Dr. Pamela S. Mayer, Superintendent of the Chapel Hill Schools, began regularly scheduled monthly informal visits with the staff of each of the ten schools. During the 1982-1983 school year, each Tuesday and Thursday, Dr. Mayer spent time talking with school staffs concerning various topics.

Feedback from the "Superintendent Visits" and from meetings of the Superintendent's Advisory Council led to a commitment to employ a full-time communications specialist. In the fall of 1982, a communications specialist was employed.

The communications specialist serves as Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and functions as one of the executive staff members within the school system. As a result of the superintendent's initiative in the public relations program, the program has been allotted funds for publications, supplies, travel, and other expenses. The superintendent involves the communications specialist in all leadership committees, seeks the practitioner's advice in dealing with various publics, including the media, and constantly encourages the staff to maintain open, honest communication with the public and the press.

Face-to-face internal communication is encouraged in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro System. The superintendent holds monthly discussion meetings with six groups within the school system. These groups include the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Association of Educators (CHCAE), the Chapel Hill High School Student Representatives, the Superintendent's Advisory Council (one teacher elected from each school), the Executive Staff (all principals and assistant superintendents), and the Leadership Team (defined in the school system as assistant principals, principals, directors, coordinators, and superintendents). The superintendent holds weekly meetings with the central office staff.

Internal communications and involvement are encouraged in the system through a comprehensive structure of approximately thirty committees. Most committees are standing committees and occasionally an ad hoc committee is selected for a special problem area. All committees have specific duties to accomplish, along with suggestions for improvements and recommendations they may decide to make to the superintendent and board of education. With just over 300 certified staff members in the school system, most employees have the opportunity to serve on at least one committee. The committee structure used in the school system is emphasized in a brochure published each year by the school system. Entitled "Participate in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools," the brochure defines the work of the various committees and lists the names of all committee members.

As part of the early development of the public relations program within the school system, the staff of the Chapel Hill School System developed and conducted a community survey. The survey was done by telephone. A report of the survey indicated that Chapel Hill-Carrboro residents rated their schools substantially higher than respondents rated their schools in the most recent Gallup Poll. More than three-fourths of the parents participating in the survey gave their schools an "A" or "B" rating, compared to forty-nine percent on the national survey. During the 1983-1984 school year, staff members throughout the school system were given the opportunity to help shape the communications strategies of the school system through their responses to a systemwide communications survey.

Besides the emphasis on face-to-face communications and participation by employees of the school system in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs within the school district, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School System has already developed a number of publications as part of their dissemination efforts.

Publications include the following:

- Gifted and Talented Education - a description of the systemwide program
- Co-Principals - a description of the co-principal concept being implemented in two of the junior high schools in the school system
- Participate in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools - a description and directory of committees
- Getting Ready for Kindergarten - parent manual for pre-school children
- Volunteer Handbook
- Planning Calendar - for staff members
- Briefings - weekly newsletter for all staff members
- Boardroom - highlights of board meetings

An area of special focus for the Communications Department in the Chapel Hill System has been working with groups such as local realtors, members of the chamber of commerce, and county commissioners. Get-acquainted programs and in-depth discussion sessions have been planned and carried out each year as the school system works to explain its goals and objectives. The superintendent has actively pursued a close working relationship between the school system and the University of North Carolina as a whole and the School of Education in particular. One result of the cooperation between the two is Saturday School for Chapel Hill-Carrboro students. The Saturday School provides Saturday classes for interested students. The classes are taught by faculty members of the University of North Carolina.

Even though the communications program in Chapel Hill is relatively new, the comprehensiveness of the program, along with its apparent success with internal and external audiences, resulted in the system's receiving the 1983 annual Blue Ribbon Award for Excellence in Communications presented by the North Carolina School Public Relations Association.

Case Study Number Five<sup>5</sup>  
Rocky Mount City Schools

Located in both Nash and Edgecombe Counties, the Rocky Mount City School System has a pupil population of 6,196. The communications program of the Rocky Mount Schools was selected from hundreds submitted

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<sup>5</sup>Interview with Lela Chesson, Rocky Mount, North Carolina, 6 February, 1985.

to the National School Boards Association for presentation at the 1984 National School Boards Association conference held in Houston, Texas. The communications plan was also selected to be included in the Management Operations Information Bank of Education Research, Inc. The Management Operations Information Bank assembles, stores, and shares successful management operations of school systems across the country.

The goals of the communications program in Rocky Mount include the following:

- To market public education in the Rocky Mount City Schools through a special plan of action of school level responsibilities, system responsibilities, and school level/system level joint responsibilities

- To strengthen internal communication with those individuals and groups within the school system -- teachers, administrators, students, board members, and all school employees

- To strengthen external communication with individuals, businesses and various community groups involved in relationships with the school system

The plan for the marketing of public education in the Rocky Mount area was developed by the superintendent, central office staff members, principals, and teachers. The plan involves all schools and all personnel in setting and completing particular marketing objectives throughout the school year. The plan for the school system has been printed and distributed throughout the school system. School building level objectives are color-coded green; system level objectives are color-coded yellow; objectives that are to be done jointly by the schools and at the system level are color-coded blue. All objectives have timelines, and simple documentation of how each objective has been met during the year is collected by the Community Schools Office in

July of each year. The major objective of the plan, according to the Superintendent, Dr. Larry Coble, is "to convey to the public that quality education is indeed a fact in the Rocky Mount City Schools." The marketing slogan, "The Rocky Mount City Schools - Where Quality Education is a Fact," was developed from that objective.

#### Internal Marketing

In addition to the activities planned in the marketing plan for the strengthening of internal communications, the superintendent has promoted other avenues for effective communication within the school system. He meets monthly with a Professional Advisory Council. The Council includes one representative elected from each of the ten schools, along with the local president of the teacher's organization. The meetings with the professional Advisory Council are one-half day sessions complete with lunch and time for extended discussions centering around classroom concerns. Teachers involved in the Professional Advisory Council are provided with substitutes for their classes for the meeting time.

Internal publications include a complete summary of each meeting of the board of education entitled "Board Briefs." In addition to communications concerning board meetings, the Community Schools Office publishes an employee newsletter entitled "Impromptu."

#### External Marketing

In addition to objectives of the marketing plan for strengthening external communications, the superintendent and staff have initiated



other activities to improve external communications. The superintendent writes a newspaper column that appears frequently in the Rocky Mount Sunday Telegram. The column, dealing with various aspects of the school system, is entitled "On the Track." The name is significant because the City of Rocky Mount is in two counties and the railroad tracks divide the two counties.

Receptions and recognition ceremonies are held throughout the years to honor school volunteers and participants in the Adopt-A-School program. During American Education Week, the superintendent hosts a breakfast for key business leaders. This past year, approximately 250 people attended the breakfast.

The public information officer in the Rocky Mount School System reports all major school events to the media. The media receive articles and photographs from the school system regularly in what the school system calls its "media blitz."

The chief marketing tool of the school system, according to the superintendent, is the annual report. The annual report for Rocky Mount includes the school system's promotional theme. Designed to be more than the usual concept of an annual report, Rocky Mount's publication includes a calendar, a map showing the location of all schools, a communication guide that lists administrators, school addresses, telephone numbers, and other basic directory information.

Presented in a magazine format, the annual report is printed on what the communications department calls "healthy" paper with a touch of at least one color. The "healthy" paper is top quality paper.

The report also includes test scores, information on the budget, and pictures taken in all areas of the school system. The success of the publication, according to the superintendent and public information director of the school system, is the distribution system for the annual report. The report is given to all employees. The report is made available at all special meetings throughout the school system such as PTA meetings and advisory council meetings. An announcement is also made through local newspapers that reports will be mailed to anyone who requests a copy. Copies are mailed to school retirees and to community leaders. The reports are not given to students to take home. Emphasis is placed on the distribution of the annual report. School personnel relate that during 1984, over 3,000 copies of the annual report were personally distributed in one day to people in the community.

Other marketing tools of the Rocky Mount School System include ten billboards placed throughout the city using the school system's promotional slogan, a series of public service announcements aired over four local radio stations, and a 16-minute slide presentation that has been shown throughout the county, the state, and in several other states.

## Chapter V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the current status of school district level public relations programs in the 142 public school units in North Carolina. The introductory chapter defined public relations as "a planned and systematic process of communications between an educational organization and its internal and external publics."

The growth over the last few years in the number of school units with full-time public relations practitioners and the nationwide interest in education, brought about partly through the release of various reports on the search for excellence in education, has created the need for new and clear directions concerning how public relations programs should be developed, the ingredients that should go into them, and the end toward which they should be directed. The growth in full-time public relations practitioners is also evident in North Carolina.

The review of literature traced the general development of public relations through the Greeks, the Romans, through ancient civilizations such as those found in India, through the American Revolution, and into the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, school public relations slowly developed as a specialized area of the total concept of public relations.

The first book with the title School Public Relations was published in 1928 by Arthur B. Moehlman. Over the last fifty to sixty years, many books and articles have been written concerning school public relations as writers attempted to define and improve the communications between the schools and the internal and external publics.

Following the historical perspective, the review of literature considered the various elements of district level communications programs. The literature defined the superintendent as the person most responsible for building an effective program. Even though the superintendent is ultimately responsible for the public relations program, more and more superintendents are delegating the public relations responsibilities to staff members who work in the public relations area on a full-time or part-time basis.

School public relations practitioners have a variety of position titles. The title of public information practitioner indicates there is more emphasis on community, communications, and information than on public relations. Whatever title is given to the practitioner, the review of literature indicates that the practitioner should answer directly to the superintendent and should be part of the superintendent's cabinet. The duties of the practitioner usually include the six major areas of research, counsel, planning, coordination, communication, and evaluation.

The literature frequently admonishes school officials to plan systematically and thoroughly for a public relations program.

Regardless of the organizational pattern used for the public relations program, good planning is essential. The local program should also be supported by a well-defined policy statement. The policy statement should express the purposes of the organization's public relations program and should provide for the delegation of authority within the program.

Effective public relations programs must have adequate financial support. While the National School Public Relations Association no longer defines the exact dollar amount for an effective public relations program, the Association's standards state that the budget should include specific public relations items such as staffing, services, and programs.

One of the most important elements of a public relations program is the evaluation component. The literature indicates that evaluation of school public relations has not reached a very high degree of sophistication but like other school programs, the public relations program should be appraised in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, its successes and failures. Some recommended ways to evaluate the public relations program include questionnaires, opinion polls, records, telephone surveys, and interviews.

School public relations programs can be divided into the two broad areas of internal communications and external communications. Internal communications includes all individuals and groups considered as part of the school organization. External communications includes all individuals and groups external to the school program or organization.

School systems have traditionally spent more time and effort in the area of external communications. School administrators and boards are coming to understand the importance of good internal communications. This awareness has been brought about by the need to gain and to preserve public support for education. Even though public relations is the responsibility of all staff members in an organization, the principal appears to play the key leadership role in implementing a school level communications program.

External communications are concerned with individual and groups outside the public schools. To be effective, the external communications should be designed to provide constant feedback to the school system.

Chapter III detailed the results of a questionnaire distributed to the public information officer in the 142 school units in North Carolina. The questionnaire was divided into three main section. Section I was designed to gather personal information concerning the public information officer along with information about the school system. Section II was designed as a checklist to gather information with reference to the components of the school district public relations programs. Section III was designed to determine the usefulness of materials distributed to school units by the State Department of Public Instruction.

After two mailings and a follow-up telephone call, all 142 questionnaires were returned. The data collected through the questionnaires were reviewed and analyzed through counting, sorting, and ranking procedures.

Chapter IV discussed the public relations programs for five school units in North Carolina. The units selected for the study included Wake County, Buncombe County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chapel Hill-Carrboro, and Rocky Mount City Schools. The units were selected for the study because they represent diverse geographical areas, they represent different sizes of school systems, and all five units have received either the Gold Medallion Award for Excellence from the National School Public Relations Association or the Blue Ribbon Award for Excellence from the North Carolina School Public Relations Association.

### Conclusions

As detailed in Chapter I, this study was directed toward answering five questions. Three of the questions will be addressed in this conclusion and the last two questions will be addressed in the recommendations that follow the conclusions.

The first question for the study was stated as follows:

What is the educational background of the individuals designated as the public relations practitioner or public relations designee in each school unit?

The information received in the questionnaire indicated the following:

<u>DEGREE</u>	<u>Number</u>
No Degree	6
Associate	1
Bachelor	52
Master	53
Specialist	19
Doctor	11

A further analysis of the background of the public relations practitioner indicates that 17 have a background in Language Arts/English and 14 majored in health and physical education. Of those reporting a master's degree, 21 of the degrees were in administration and 10 in supervision. All of the doctorates reported were in administration. A total of 56 of the public relations practitioners indicated they were certified as teachers. Using the standards for public relations practitioners developed by the National School Public Relations Association, all except seven of the public relations practitioners in North Carolina public schools meet the educational qualifications defined by the Association. The Association maintains that a bachelor's degree or higher is the minimum education acceptable for a public relations practitioner working with a school system.

The second question for the study was stated as follows:

What are the components of the public relations programs in the various school units in North Carolina?

Information received from the school units relative to the components of the local program were presented in chart form. A further analysis of the data indicates a diversity among the school systems. Differences can be noted in all sizes of school units and among school units in the same region. The five most frequently reported program areas include these:

<u>Program area</u>	<u>Number of Units</u>
News releases	115
Special brochures	90
School calendar	88
Photography	87
Programs for community groups	85



The data indicate a trend identified in Chapter I of this study. School systems spend more time on external public relations efforts than on internal public relations efforts.

The third question for the study was stated as follows:

What is the role of the State Department of Public Instruction in the district level public relations programs?

The role of the State Department of Public Instruction as defined by the various school systems is to provide a constant flow of information. Respondents basically found materials sent from the State Department to be helpful. The two publications selected as most useful by the practitioners were "Inform" and "Memo." These two publications are sent on a regular basis to the public relations designees in each school system. The publications provide information concerning a wide variety of programs and events of interest to the school systems.

A second role for the State Department of Public Instruction as defined by the public relations practitioners is to provide workshops and staff development in key areas relating to the public information program. Particular areas for workshops identified in the questionnaire included graphics, marketing, developing slide/tape presentations, and developing a total public relations program on a "shoestring."

Two major conclusions were derived from the total study of the district level public relations program in the public schools of North Carolina. The first is that the superintendent is the key person in the successful development, implementation, and evaluation of the public relations program. Regardless of the size of the school

unit, it appears that the superintendent is still the key person in the public relations program. Regardless of the funding provided for the public relations program, the superintendent, again, appears to be the key person in the success of the overall program. Regardless of the training of the public relations practitioner, even though excellent training and preparation are assets, the training and skill of the superintendent in various areas of public relations appear to be even more important than the training and skills of the public relations designee.

The second major conclusion reached in this study is that successful public relations programs appear to have similar characteristics. The most important characteristic is a visible and accessible superintendent. He meets, talks to, and listens to all types of people and groups. A second characteristic is the use of committees and advisory groups which have specific tasks to do. People are involved in decision-making. The superintendent appears to be highly skilled in working with large groups and especially with small groups. Planning and evaluation are essential, ongoing components in the successful programs.

### Recommendations

Two of the questions detailed in Chapter I to be answered by this study are better addressed as recommendations. The fourth question to be answered stated:

Based on a review of literature and an analysis of district level public relations programs in North Carolina, what recommendations can be made for essential components of district level public relations programs?

Based on an analysis of this study and a review of literature, the following general conclusions concerning public relations programs are made:

1. At least one individual who answers directly to the superintendent should be responsible for the school system's public relations program.
2. The public relations practitioner should have a college degree, preferably in a communications area or with specialized training in communications.
3. The individual responsible for the public relations program should be given enough time and adequate financial support to carry out the program of the school system.
4. The public relations program should be well planned and the planning should take place following a thorough assessment of the school and the community.
5. The public relations program should serve both internal and external publics.
6. The public relations program should be evaluated on an ongoing basis during the school year and at the end of the school year.

The fifth question to be answered by this study as detailed in Chapter I stated:

What recommendations can be made for a program of assistance provided to school districts by the Division of Publications and Information, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction?

Based on an analysis of this study and a review of literature, the following recommendations are made:

1. A steady flow of information should be supplied by the Division of Publications and Information to the school district public relations designees. The information should be sent directly to the practitioners, preferably on at least a weekly basis.
2. The Division of Publications and Information needs to place more emphasis on forecasting trends in education.
3. The Division of Publications and Information should work directly with superintendents in explaining the communications process to superintendents.
4. The Division of Publications and Information needs to provide workshops and staff development designed to help in areas of the program in which practitioners are experiencing difficulties. Workshops should be conducted on statewide and regional levels.
5. The Division of Publications and Information should work to coordinate efforts between the Community Schools Program and public relations practitioners who do not have responsibilities for the Community Schools Program.
6. The Division of Publications and Information needs to provide a center at the State Department of Public Instruction which will include books and publications and sample publications from across the state and nation.

7. The Division of Publications and Information needs to identify excellent programs and public relations practitioners who have special training or expertise. These programs and people should be made available to other units across the state. A beginning point for this recommendation could well be the information collected through the survey conducted as part of this study.
8. The Division of Publications and Information needs to organize networks among the public relations practitioners. These networks could provide support and help, especially to those individuals who are new to their positions or to those individuals developing new programs.
9. The Division of Publications and Information needs to work with the North Carolina School Public Relations Association, other organizations, and colleges and universities to provide more college courses in public relations/communications and perhaps to develop a major in school communications.
10. Consideration should be given by the State Department of Public Instruction to funding a half-time position, a full-time position, or more to units for a public relations practitioner. This funding should be based on the size of the unit.

### Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the current status of district level school public relations programs in the 142 public school units in North Carolina. This study was not designed to determine the effectiveness of these programs. Since this study has detailed the extent of the public relations programs currently being implemented in the various school districts, it is highly recommended that a study be done now to determine the effectiveness of the school public relations programs across the state.

One of the most effective ways to evaluate a program, whether on a school level, districtwide or statewide level, is to measure the program against its objectives thus providing a logical means for appraising a program in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, its successes and failures. Other suggested processes for evaluating public relations programs include the use of questionnaires, opinion polls, telephone surveys, and by analyzing records.

As the result of this study, it is recommended that, for evaluation dealing with products, activities, or management by objectives, internal evaluations be done within individual schools and school districts. It is further recommended that, for systemwide comprehensive surveys and for statewide studies, external evaluations be done by evaluation specialists.

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## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS



Please answer the following questions as completely as possible:

(Telephone Number) (Courier Number)

9. Please list professional communications organizations to which you belong.

10. Do you have responsibilities for the Community Schools Program?

Yes ( )                      No ( )

If no, please list the name of the Community Schools Director for your school system.

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B. The School System

1. What is the size of your public relations staff? Please include professional, certified staff members and clerical staff members.

Full-time \_\_\_\_\_  
(number)

Half-time \_\_\_\_\_  
(number)

Less than half-time \_\_\_\_\_  
(number)

Volunteers \_\_\_\_\_  
(number)

2. Is the school district's public relations program evaluated annually?

Yes ( )                      No ( )

How is the program evaluated?

Outside consultants organizations ( )

Written evaluation by the public information director ( )

Written evaluation by the Superintendent ( )

Other ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please specify)

3. Please list those programs, publications or any aspect of the public relations program you consider to be your best and/or strongest areas.

## II. Please check those items that you do on a regular basis:

_____ staff newsletter	how often _____
_____ community newsletter	how often _____
_____ parent newsletter	how often _____
_____ parent/community newsletter	how often _____
_____ board meeting agendas	
_____ board meeting highlights/follow-up	
_____ school calendar	
_____ annual report	
_____ personnel handbook	
_____ special brochures	
_____ news releases	
_____ radio programs	
_____ communication/public relations workshops	
_____ community surveys	
_____ tip sheet for media	
_____ newspaper supplements	
_____ newspaper clippings to staff members	
_____ preparation of audiovisual materials	
_____ photography	
_____ programs for community groups	
_____ preparation of slide/tape program	
_____ building level newsletters	
_____ work with local realtors	
_____ plan special displays	
_____ write speeches, resolutions, position statements, policies, etc.	
_____ work with individual schools on various problems	
_____ Other (Please specify)	

### III. Help from the State Department and Other Sources

- A. Please indicate whether you receive the following items from the State Department along with your evaluation of these publications.

	<u>Receive</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Not Helpful</u>
Inform (Weekly)	_____	_____	_____	_____
SBE Highlights (Monthly)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Memo (Periodically)	_____	_____	_____	_____
News Releases	_____	_____	_____	_____
Schedule of Activities	_____	_____	_____	_____
State and National Education Reports	_____	_____	_____	_____
Regional Reports	_____	_____	_____	_____

- B. Following is a list of programs of interest to school systems. Please check those items for which it would be helpful to have background information and the name of a contact person.

_____ Teacher of the Year	_____ N. C. Close-Up
_____ Secondary Principal of the Year	_____ U. S. Senate Youth
_____ Scholars Program	_____ Scholarships for Teachers
_____ National School Recognition Program	_____ Scholarships for Students
_____ Bus Driver Safety Awards	_____ Science Competitions
_____ Programs of Excellence	_____ Math Competitions
_____ Children's Trust Fund	_____ Business/Industry Involvement
_____ Accreditation	_____ Governor's School
_____ Career Development	_____ Child Fund
_____ Dropout Prevention	_____ Others _____

- C. Please list any books and/or publications that are particularly helpful to you as a public relations practitioner.

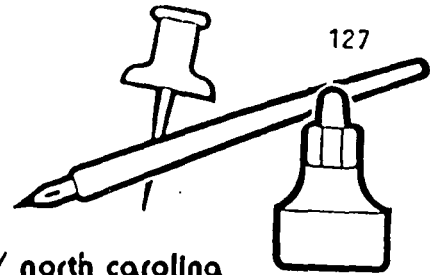
- D. Please detail ways in which the Division of Information and Communication can be of help to you in your work in the school system. Use a separate sheet of paper if additional space is needed.

RETURN BY NOVEMBER 30, 1984 TO: Tom I. Davis, Special Assistant to the State Superintendent, Communications, State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

# MEMO:



to: local school information officers  
from: the division of information and publications / north carolina  
department of public instruction (919) 733-4258

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NOVEMBER 16, 1984

We already know you public information officers are too busy to fill out survey forms but that's why we need 100% input...to document exactly what's going on and to share these results with each LEA.

In a couple of trial runs, completing the attached survey took only about 12 minutes... so please find a fifth of an hour in time to meet the Nov. 30 deadline. When the complete analysis is returned for your information, you'll be glad you did.

We realize that results will vary widely according to sizes and budgets as well as other related duties of community school coordinators and part-time public information designees.

Please take this opportunity to brag about your programs and your biggest success stories, and to help the Division of Information and Publications improve our services to individual units. This information also will serve to update our mailing lists...and remind you to be sure this division is included on yours. We need copies of all your printed materials and unusual news and feature articles.

We can learn a lot from each other so why not fill it out today before this survey sinks to the bottom of some stack!

Our thanks for your prompt attention...and please add all the extra pages you need.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom I. Davis".

Tom I. Davis

RETURN COMPLETED SURVEY TO:  
Division of Information and Publications  
Room 352  
Education Building  
Raleigh, NC 27611

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP LETTER



*State of North Carolina*  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Raleigh 27611

A CRAIG PHILLIPS  
SUPERINTENDENT

TOMI DAVIS  
SPECIAL ASSISTANT,  
COMMUNICATIONS

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Selected Public Information Officers  
FROM: Jane Gregory  
DATE: December 15, 1984

Almost 100 survey responses were returned on the deadline date, but we will not stop bothering you until 100% respond.

Enclosed is another survey form in case the other one got lost in the pre-Christmas rush.

Complete data will be helpful to all of us as we plan for improving programs, and will guide this Division's goal to provide better services to meet your needs.